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AN
EXAMINATION
OF THE
DOCTRINE
OF
FUTURE RETRIBUTION,

IN CONNECTION WITH THE MORAL NATURE
OF MAN, THE PRINCIPLE OF ANALOGY,
AND THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

BY HOSEA BALLOU.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY THOMAS WHITTEMORE,
37 Cornhill.
1846.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1846, by
THOMAS WHITTEMORE,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of
Massachusetts.

Stereotyped by
GEORGE A. CURTIS;
NEW ENGLAND TYPE AND STEREOTYPE FOUNDRY.

DEDICATION.

FROM numerous considerations, which have made a deep and lasting impression on his mind, the author of this work is induced, most respectfully and affectionately, to inscribe it to the SECOND UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY IN BOSTON, to which it has been his happiness, for many years, to minister.

H. BALLOU.

Boston, March 30th, 1834.

NOTE.

The division of this work into chapters, the titles affixed to the paragraphs, the table of contents, the index, and the foot notes, are to be attributed to Thomas Whittemore.

P R E F A C E .

A PART of what is contained in the following work has been before published in the Universalist Expositor. But as that work never had a very extensive circulation, the author had a desire of bringing his views on the subject treated on, more extensively before the public, and that in a treatise by itself; by which means it might be more likely to become a subject of general consideration and investigation.

The whole, as it is now embodied, will make the reader pretty well acquainted with the views of the author, on the general subject, and the principles on which he founds them.

If the views maintained in the following essay are any more in accordance with truth, than those doctrines which oppose them, there is every good reason for laying them before the public, which can be required for so doing. We cannot allow that truth ought not to be advanced if it conflict with long established opinions, and tend

to give offence to pious persons, who have long been established in the popular doctrines of the day. If we consent to such argument, we thereby pass censure on that Divine Teacher, who warned his disciples to beware of the doctrines of the Scribes and Pharisees; and not only do we thereby charge him with fault, but justify his revilers and persecutors. In so doing we should take the position occupied by those, in our Saviour's time, who shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; and who would neither enter themselves, nor suffer others so to do.

If the master spirits who led in the reformation, in the sixteenth century, had yielded to the fear of giving offence to a church which was imbued with error and corruption, the moral darkness which characterized that age might have continued a protracted night; and the benign light, which has made such salutary advances, might have been excluded from the Christian world.

Whatever may be said to justify Galileo for abjuring the Copernican system, when his life was menaced, the same could not be urged in extenuation of the impropriety of withholding important truth from society, in times which are not disgraced with offices of inquisition.

Should the reader object to the foregoing remarks, as giving any countenance to the publishing of doctrine so erroneous as he may believe is maintained in the following pages, he is reminded that such an objection constitutes himself as odious an inquisition as ever was nourished in the bosom of popery. The times in which we live, and the happy government which guarantees and defends the right of every individual in community, not only justify the honest confession of our religious sentiments, but call on us to discharge such a duty. In addition to this call, a paramount one is recognized from truth itself. To this call the writer of the following essay has been conscientiously devoted for more than forty years; and he has endeavored faithfully to discharge the duties which it embraced, notwithstanding the many painful conflicts through which they have carried him. Not that he would boast of having advanced nothing but truth; for experience has often enforced on his mind the truth of the maxim, that "to err is human." But such experience has been useful; as by exposing his mistakes to the investigation of stronger and more enlightened minds, they have been corrected. One consolation he has constantly enjoyed, in

reflecting that his mistakes were errors of the head, never of the heart. It has always remained his fixed resolution, to keep a mind open to conviction; always active in investigating religious truth; constantly ready to profess and hold forth any opinion when convinced of its truth however unpopular, and however opposed by divines, by the schools, or by his dearest friends. This course has led him to give up many religious tenets, which were taught him in his youth, and not a few which were embraced by the denomination to which he has from his youth belonged. Pursuing this course, he early renounced the doctrine of endless punishment; the doctrine of the trinity; that of native depravity; that of the imputation of sin and of righteousness; that of the vicarious sufferings of Christ; and nearly eighteen years ago, the doctrine of punishment in the future state. It has been his lot to meet with much opposition on most of these points, from various denominations, and not the least strenuous from those of the denomination with which he has been happy to hold connexion. For the painful travail endured from all this opposition, he has been abundantly compensated by seeing the rapid advance of the doctrines which he has embraced, and endeavored to advocate.

The object of the writer of the following pages is to place his views, respecting the doctrine of a future state of retribution, before the public, and to preserve his arguments on that subject, that when the time shall come, as he believes it will, when people in general will number the tenet of future punishment among those corruptions of Christianity, which will then be abandoned, it may be known that the writer disbelieved it in his day, and also that the arguments with which he opposed it may then be known.

Universalists now take a pleasure in looking back and tracing, from Origen down to our time, the progress of the doctrine which embraces the salvation of all men; and so they will doubtless continue to do in future ages.

Some may query whether a proper regard to the opinions and feelings of honest, faithful and affectionate brethren, who believe in the doctrine of future retribution, but yet earnestly contend for final restoration, would not incline the writer to be silent on the subject, and not to come out with this publication. To this inquiry, it is replied, that such brethren, with their many commendable qualities, are warmly cherished in the affections of the writer's heart, nor are they the less

regarded because they do not adopt his opinions. And he feels confident that such brethren will entertain no suspicions of his want of respect for them. They will not fail to consider that the views of the writer, on the subject of retribution, are not so wide from theirs, as theirs are from the views of those authors whom they quote as authority in support of future retribution. They would doubtless sooner embrace the opinion of no future sin and misery, than defend the doctrine maintained by that good man, exemplary Christian, and faithful minister, Elhanan Winchester, who supposed that the wicked, in the life to come, will suffer for ages and ages, inconceivable torment in literal fire and brimstone. Such torment is now denied by our doctors, who maintain *endless* punishment, and rejected also by those who believe in a state of discipline hereafter which shall end in an entire reformation. Such brethren will also cordially respond to the assurance that the writer of the following work will never withhold a sincere fellowship from a faithful brother, because he disagrees with him on the doctrine of divine retribution.

It is very possible that some, who have a strong desire that nothing should be done, which should

tend, in the least, to endanger the harmony and cordial fellowship of Universalists, may think that prudence would at least plead for a delay, and suggest the propriety of deferring this publication to some future time, when it might give less offence. Such may be assured that their good wishes for the harmony and fellowship of our order, are duly respected ; but they cannot be ignorant of the fact that the doctrine of a future state of punishment has been disbelieved, by ministering brethren of our order, for many years, and that much has been published with a view to disprove that doctrine ; and, moreover, that now said doctrine is generally disbelieved by Universalists of our connexion ; and yet much harmony prevails, and our fellowship remains, and is warmly cherished between brethren whose opinions disagree on the subject of this doctrine. The writer would further remark, that both age and infirmity admonish him that what he feels it his duty to do, he ought not to delay ; and he cannot believe that any of his brethren can feel, in the least, wounded because their aged brother should finish his labors in accordance with the dictates of his own understanding. It is a happy circumstance, that in the denomination of Univer-

salists, no one feels bound to defend and support the particular opinions of another, any further than he is himself convinced of their truth and importance. Our platform of faith is general, and allows individuals an extensive latitude to think freely, investigate minutely, and to adopt what particular views best comport with the honest convictions of the mind, and fearlessly to avow and defend the same.

As the writer of the following pages has, from the commencement of his studies and ministry, asserted, enjoyed, and improved his right to think freely, and to embrace or reject the opinions of others, as the force of evidence appeared to direct, so he wishes to continue to do, the little remainder of his days of labor. And he would assure his brethren, that he has always felt it his duty to accord the same right to others; and this he hopes to continue to do in future.

Feeling an unabated desire for the advancement of divine truth, and the pure religion of the Saviour, he cannot willingly withhold from contributing, what he humbly hopes, may have a tendency to this desired end.

THE AUTHOR.

March 20th, 1834.

DOCTRINE OF FUTURE RETRIBUTION.

CHAPTER I.

RETRIBUTION CONSIDERED IN CONNEXION WITH THE MORAL NATURE OF MAN.

PROPOSITION. *By a careful and studied reference to the moral constitution of man, and the laws by which the human mind is governed, it is ascertained that true religion has no need of a belief in a future state of rewards and punishments for its establishment and prosperity among men.*

THE moral tendency of doctrine, hav- Examination
ing now extensively engaged the atten- of the
tion of theorists, is fast advancing its question
interest in the minds of people generally ; and desirable.
divines of different denominations are, therefore,
desirous of recommending their respective tenets
to the consideration and acceptance of the public,
by inducing a belief that they are justly entitled
to a preference above all others, on account of
their evident tendency to moral virtue.

This state of things ought not to be considered

as undesirable, for it will eventually lead to most salutary consequences. In fact, it shows, most evidently, that moral virtue is held in such high estimation, that it is worthy of being made the umpire, to whose decision contending theologians must submit their respective theories. This must be a subject of congratulation to every lover of moral virtue; for here he sees all, who are engaged in disputes about their varying and conflicting creeds, paying a voluntary homage to what he so warmly loves, and to which his heart is sincerely devoted. It is true that the good, of which we here speak, must be found mixed with some evil, as are all other favorable things and circumstances, enjoyed in this world. There will be found in the many pleas which are, and will be offered by partisans in favor of their respective, darling tenets, some unkind insinuations, some uncandid representations, some violent thrusts, which will indicate a greater love of party than of truth and morals. But after all, the balance will be favorable; truth will be sifted and better understood; and though the evil may be bitter, like the bud, it will soon give way to fruit which will be desirable. It would be expecting too much of men, so imperfect as we know the leaders of the different denominations are, to think they will always treat each other as they would be willing to be treated, or refer to each other

with that respect which they love to have shown to themselves. Though it is pleasant and agreeable to hope for such a state of religion, as will make all its votaries love each other as they love themselves; we must not forget that the due exercise of charity for man, even in the present state of things, is a virtue which is entitled to precedence above all others. Let this virtue be as extensively exercised as the calls for it occur, and let the controversy go on till the legitimate relation between the doctrine of divine truth and those sound and wholesome morals, which are its natural fruits, shall be clearly understood. Truth will then shine in unborrowed lustre, and virtue attract by its native beauty and moral worth.

The two theories of doctrine, which at present seem most to call the attention of the public to a candid investigation of their respective merits, on those grounds which we have before noticed, are distinguished, the one by depending on a belief in a future state of rewards and punishment, to guard us against the practice of vice, and to induce us to obey the precepts of religion and morality; the other, by teaching that all the reward we ought to expect, for a faithful discharge of our duty to God and our fellow-creatures, is found in the enjoyments which are necessarily connected with religion and duty, in the present state, where our obedi-

Two doctrines
which arrest pub-
lic attention.

ence is practised ; and that all the retributions for wrong-doing, in the present world, are the infelicities which cannot be separated from the vices, which bring them upon us. The former directs us to look beyond the grave for the rewards of our virtues, and for the punishments of our vices ; the latter teaches us to expect both these in the present world. The statement here made of the two theories, and of their respective marks of distinction, is thought to be sufficiently definite, as the subject is pretty well understood by people in general.

Our object in the present disquisition is to try, in a candid manner, the claims of these two theories, not only in reference to their moral influence, but also with regard to some other arguments which are urged by their respective supporters, in their defence.

The common argument from the fears and hopes of men. It has long been believed and taught by the learned doctors of the Christian church, that man being so constituted as to be persuaded by the two principles of hope and fear, our Creator has seen fit to promise us a reward, in the future state, for the faithful performance of our duty in this ; and that he has threatened us with punishment, in the future state, both for our neglect of obedience to his requirements, and for those acts in which we violate them. Thus it is contended that reason and

experience teach the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, as analogous with our moral constitution. The advocates of this view of the general question are confident that if the hope of future-reward was removed, and the fear of future punishment done away, religion and virtue would no longer attract man's attention, nor aught remain to restrain him from indulging himself in all the vices and abominations which are forbidden.

That those views and arguments ^{Said} should be satisfactory to people who ^{arguments} examined. are taught them from childhood, need not excite our wonder; nor need we, for a moment, withhold our charity from those teachers who are now engaged in defending them. These teachers were, from their infant days, taught those opinions. Nor is it at all difficult to account for all the zeal which seems to animate those who are making every possible exertion to keep those sentiments in credit, and to prevent the prevalence of the opposite doctrine. On general principles we are perfectly safe in supposing those to be honest and sincere, who are thus employed, and that they have the good of mankind in view.

But, notwithstanding we feel bound to respect the honest and sincere, and to treat their doctrines and arguments with candor, it seems, in every view of the subject, a reasonable duty to examine

carefully, not only the premises on which doctrines are predicated, but also the legitimacy of inferences which are drawn from them.

As to the fact, that man is influenced and persuaded by the opposite principles of hope and fear, it seems reasonable that it be allowed. It seems very evident that we always act with a hope to gain some benefit, and thereby to avoid some evil; but does it necessarily follow that the benefit which we hope to gain must be in a future state, and that the evil we hope to avoid must be there too? This is directly denied by those whose views we are now examining. They say, if the fear of future punishment were removed, and the hope of future reward taken away, there would be nothing to induce us to be religious and moral, nor anything to prevent us from running into the practice of every vice and abomination. Then surely we could *act* without being incited by considerations of a future state. It would be no easier for us to commit sin without a motive, than to practise virtue without a motive. But where lies the expected benefit, which induces the vicious to sin? Does it present itself to the imagination in a future state? No one will pretend this. Then it must be given up, at once, that in order to induce men to act it is necessary to place the object to be obtained in a future world. The candid reader will now see, that the

doctrine we are examining is unsound; for it depends on the supposition, that as we act from hope and fear, the good hoped for, and the evil dreaded, must both be in a future state.

If, in order further to maintain the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, its advocate should say, that although men may be induced to sin, and may become as active in so doing as possible, without the expectation of any good in the future state, yet without such expectation they cannot be persuaded to become religious and moral, he is called on to find out and assign the reason.

We have now arrived at a spot where we should do well to pause and duly consider. All the professed friends of religion and moral virtue will allow that the wicked are too active in committing sin, that they run too greedily in pursuit of forbidden indulgences; but none of them suppose that these wicked thus act in expectation of obtaining any good in a future state. Where, then, do the wicked expect to receive the enjoyment which they are pursuing? In this present state, to be sure.

Reader, be cautious! If the wicked are induced to commit all manner of iniquity, and to practise every forbidden abomination, by no expectation of any enjoyment but in this life, can there be any other reason assigned

The great
truth to be
taught.

why they do not forsake the ways of impiety and vice, and become religious and moral, than because religion and morality do not promise them so much happiness and enjoyment, in the present world, as does the course they are now in? No one will or can doubt on this subject. Then let us ask, whether the view which the wicked have of religion and morality is a right one? To this question all will answer in the negative. We are then ready for a general and a safe conclusion. There is no necessity of promising a reward in a future state for the practice of duty in the present. All that is wanting for this purpose is to understand and to be persuaded that righteousness brings an ample reward, in the present life.

This conclusion is abundantly justified by the fact, that in room of obtaining the good which the wicked promise themselves in the paths of vice, they always meet with that degree of trouble and infelicity which constitutes a just recompense for their disobedience to the commands of God, and the dictates of conscience.

Danger
of expecting
pleasure in
sin. In our investigation of the force of motive to induce the wicked to push forward in wrong-doing, we must not neglect to notice the counteracting power which is overcome by it (according to common opinion). It is a fact, with which all are acquainted, that nearly all the vicious have been educated in the

belief of a future state of rewards and punishments; yet notwithstanding the apprehensions which they have entertained, that by the practice of the vices in which they indulged their passions, they were exposing themselves to inconceivable miseries hereafter; the expectation of enjoyment in the present state, has carried them on in the strong current of sin, which has broken down every barrier, and furnished conclusive proof that no motive is so sure of inducing to action, as the expectation of immediate happiness.

In view of these facts, who will wonder that in these times there should be some engaged in laboring to convince men that present happiness can be obtained by being faithful in the discharge of our duty to God, to our fellow-creatures, and to ourselves, by doing justly, loving mercy, and by walking humbly, and by no other means; and that however flattering sin may appear, and however strongly our blind, fleshly passions may tempt us from duty, moral death, condemnation, and misery will be the immediate and sure recompense for unlawful indulgence?

We maintain that this view, and all the facts which we can find connected with it, are in accordance with the laws of the human mind, and will be found to agree with universal experience. By these views we arrive at the desideratum long sought

These views
agree with
human
experience.

for, the reason why the promises of complete bliss, in the future world, and the threatenings of most dire torments, have not accomplished the design for which they were so vehemently urged on the people. Yes, we here discover the reason why such doctrines have not been able to restrain their most zealous believers from the very sins, for which they believed these threatenings would be executed on those who practised them. Deceive ourselves as much as we may, whenever truth appears we find ourselves in pursuit of happiness, in the present world; and if we are vicious, it is in consequence of an erroneous expectation of obtaining it by wicked means; and if we are pious and virtuous, it is because we love to be so, and find ourselves richly rewarded in keeping the divine commands, and in obedience to the dictates of conscience.

The inconsistency
of the
partialist clergy.

We would not be understood to suppose that the divine light, which shows us these invaluable truths, has never shined in the understandings of our divines, who so much depend on future rewards and punishments to support religion and virtue; for they frequently discover this light, and communicate it to the public. But they do not appear to enjoy its steady rays, nor do they conform their doctrine to its directions. If we ask them what constitutes true religion, they tell us it is the love of God in the heart. If we ask them

what constitutes genuine morality, they will tell us that it is the natural fruit of true religion. Ask them whether we can either love God, or practise morality, by being induced by the hope of future rewards, or the fear of future punishments, and they will answer in the negative, with great assurance. But by the force of tradition, and by the influence of habit, together with some other causes, they will continue to advocate the notion that religion and morality would quit our world, if the hopes and fears of future rewards and punishments were not kept up, and caused to act on the mind.

We have a remarkable instance Just sentiments of Professor Stuart. of the foregoing inconsistency in Professor Stuart's Letter to Dr. Channing. He says,—"*Religion, all true religion, is a voluntary offering on the part of man to his Creator. A forced creed is no creed. Belief, from its own nature and the very constitution of the human mind, must be free, spontaneous, induced by argument, not compelled by fear or by threats. All professed belief of this latter kind, is utterly unworthy of the name. It is an object of abhorrence to God, and of loathing to men.*"

After reading the above quotation, His gross inconsistency. and after duly considering the unquestionable truth of everything there stated, who could reasonably expect to find the learned professor endeavoring to induce the human mind to

search for religion, and the true faith of the gospel, by urging the terrors of future misery? Yet we find him, in the same Letter, holding the following terrific language:—“*As an immortal being, I look forward to the time when myself and all around me are to enter on the ‘recompense of reward,’ a final eternal one. If I am serious in my religious views; if I am well persuaded that they are true, and this, after repeated, protracted, and patient examination; then I must be utterly destitute even of the spirit of common humanity, if I do not desire others to participate with me in this persuasion. Were it a matter pertaining merely to their temporal interests, most of my fellow-beings would pronounce me destitute of humanity, in case I should not warn those around me to escape from it. But O the never dying soul! The awful tribunal of ‘eternal judgment!’ ‘The fearfulness of falling into the hands of the living God, who is a consuming fire!’ If I believe that there are unequivocal declarations in God’s word (as I truly do) in respect to these tremendous subjects; if I believe that the impenitent are surely exposed to endless misery; that those who reject the Saviour as he is offered in the gospel, ‘shall not see life, but that the wrath of God will abide on them;’ can I, as a man of any pretensions to benevolence, refrain from telling all this to others, from urging it upon them, and from*

warning them of the danger in which I sincerely believe them to be ? ”

It seems impossible to arrange two paragraphs so as to exhibit contradiction more plainly than is manifested by the two above quoted from the learned professor. In the first, he assures us that a religion, or a professed belief induced by fear or by threats, is an “object of abhorrence to God, and of loathing to men.” In the last he presents us with the wrath of God and eternal misery, as the fruit of his benevolence. He holds up the Saviour, in one hand, and makes an offer of him for our acceptance; in the other, he presents the wrath of God and eternal misery; if we receive the Saviour, we escape this eternal misery; but if not, then this misery surely awaits us. These are the terms on which a Saviour is offered by a divine who tells us that our profession of the Saviour, compelled by fears or threats, is an object of abhorrence to God, and of loathing to men! Thus he would endeavor to set up and establish the very thing which God abhors, and which men loathe!

There is no man so entirely ignorant of the laws of the human mind, Reasons why we should love God. as to suppose that we can be induced to love our Creator, either by a promised reward, or by threatened torment; and yet these motives are constantly urged on the people for this very pur-

pose ; and the arguments we are examining, in defence of a future state of rewards and punishments, contend that religion and morality depend on them.

If our Creator is worthy of the love and devotion of his rational offspring, a fact which none will deny, it must be on account of his real goodness to them ; and if his requirements are worthy of our careful observance, which none will question, it must be because the keeping of them is enjoyment to us. With these simple, self-evident propositions in clear view, why should we have recourse to hereafter rewards and punishments to incite us to love God and to keep his commandments ? To induce us to love God, nothing is necessary but to make us acquainted with his real character ; and to persuade us to keep the divine commands, no argument need be used but to show us the interest we have in obedience.

We should not do entire justice to this subject, should we neglect to show, that it is morally *impossible*, by the promise of a hereafter reward, and the threatening of hereafter punishment, to induce any one to love God and to keep his commandments. Should we so far deceive ourselves as to suppose we had complied with these duties, from such motives, we should at once see our mistake were we asked the question, whether it were our *Creator* which we felt a love for, or that

reward which influenced our affections? If we try the subject by attending to any circumstance within the wide range of common life, we shall at once see, that we are incapable of loving any object we can name, either by the expectation of obtaining a recompense therefor, or of escaping the greatest calamity thereby. Keep this truth in mind, and then observe that the whole, which God requires of us, is to love him with all the heart, and our neighbors as ourselves, and that no acceptable service can be rendered to our Creator, but on this principle of love,—and our whole subject is perfectly clear, and free from the least obscurity.

But we must carry this research God and virtue love-ly in themselves. still farther. For it is necessary for us to understand that the preaching of future rewards and punishments, for the purpose of inducing people to love God and moral virtue, is not only *useless*, but *pernicious*. All such preaching, be it ever so well intended, not only amounts to a declaration, that God and moral virtue are, in themselves, unlovely, and unworthy of being loved, but, as far as it is believed, serves to alienate the affections from these most precious objects. We may illustrate this subject by the use of figures furnished in the Scriptures. There God is represented by a fountain of living waters. Divine truth, by waters, by wine and milk, by

bread, &c. Should we be offered an immense reward for accepting these nourishing aliments, and should we be threatened with severe punishments if we refused them,—it would be natural for us to suppose, that the person who should make such proposals, and state such conditions, did not believe these things to be of any value in themselves; and the greater the zeal manifested by him from whom such proposals should come, the stronger would be the evidence to us of this forbidding fact. We see, then, that this kind of preaching is not only useless, but that it is, in fact, of a tendency the most pernicious.

As it is confidently believed that the arguments, to which the reader has just been attending, are so clear and self-evident, that no well-informed divine will ever attempt to disprove them, it seems almost needless to attempt to pursue the general subject, to which they relate, any farther; but it being a fact that the human mind, even when convinced of the truth of important doctrinal propositions, may have been so enfeebled by the force of tradition, and may still remain so limited as to mental vision, as to be quite unable to trace out the relation of some of the first inferences which those propositions afford, it is thought expedient to go on and show such relation, at least in regard to some things which are often brought against them.

No question seems to be re-^{What kind of fear will}sorted to, by the opposers of our ^{deter me from sin?} views, more frequently than the following:—If I am taught to fear no punishment for sin, in a future state, what am I to fear, that I may be thereby deterred from the commission of sin? It is true that this question is not usually put in the first person singular, as here stated; it is pretty uniformly stated in relation to the wicked, who are a class of people to which our opposers do not belong. But we think, whoever asks the question, should ask it in relation to himself. But this he is loath to do; he is not willing to imply that he is so much in love of sin, as to need the fear of punishment in another world to deter him from committing it. This opinion, that we are so different from other people, that we need not the same inducements to influence our conduct as they do, is one of those extraordinary things, which blind bigotry alone is able to produce. In everything, which does not come within the compass of our rank superstition, we feel perfectly safe, in calculating that other people may be influenced to act from the same motives which influence ourselves. We safely calculate all our labor, all our traffic with the world, all our national policy on this principle. On this principle the most wealthy are not afraid to venture their whole estates; on this, no man is afraid to

risk all he has, and even his life. In the concerns of commerce and wealth, we know that people aim at profit therein ; and in relation to personal safety, we fear nothing among those who are interested in our lives, either by love or profit.

Answer. The fear of doing wrong. Having thus corrected the error of supposing that it is necessary to induce others to avoid sin and to practise virtue, by an influence which we do not ourselves need, we may go on to answer our question as it is stated in the first person. The question is, What am I to fear, in order to prevent myself from doing wrong ? Answer : That very wrong itself. By wrong, we mean sin, or the transgression of the rule of moral right. Fear of sin itself is the only fear that can prevent my committing it. Should that superstition which speculates in the imaginary torments of the damned, in the invisible world, fill me as full of its fear as a live coal is of heat, still, if the love of sin is in my heart, I am, for all this fear, none the less a sinner. Will it be asked whether this fear, though it cannot purify the heart, may not prevent the outward act of sin ? Answer : No. For this very superstition, which is the author of this fear, always presents to the mind ways and means whereby the sin may be committed, and the punishment avoided. There is scarcely an instance

known, of the execution of most notorious criminals, who suffer death at the hand of the public executioner, but the wretch is first furnished by the clergy, who preach the terrors of hereafter misery, with a confident hope of escaping the wrath and torment which were held up by them to induce him to repentance. In this country, as well as in Catholic countries; in our religious communities, as well as in communities which are Catholic in their creed and customs, the ministers of religion are careful, by the terrors of damnation, to save from damnation the most vile of the vile; even those, who, according to their own creeds, most justly deserve it! In fact, it is a truth, which stares us in the face, that, according to the preaching and conduct of our clergy, who dwell so much on the retributions of eternity, the morally honest and industrious citizen who does not profess their creeds, is far more likely to suffer the pains of their hell forever, than the assassin, who sheds innocent blood! These facts are not mentioned with a wish to prejudice the mind of the reader against the honest intentions of those ministers of religion, of whom we speak; their delusion may be strong enough to hide from their understanding the utter impropriety of their doctrines. What we wish to do, is to show that these terrors of future damnation do not prevent crimes. In Catholic communities, the priest can

give absolution to the murderer. He has therefore, no terror of future punishment to prevent his committing the crime. All he fears is, that he may lose his life. Among us, our clergy repair immediately to the prison, as soon as the murderer is lodged in it, for the purpose of preparing him for heaven and everlasting bliss ; and it is a very rare circumstance that they fail of their purpose. Who, then, has occasion to fear this hereafter punishment ? If the fear of being detected and punished, in this world, where all know that the laws must have their course, were taken entirely away, it is altogether likely that overt crime would thereby be increased ; but if the prison and the gallows could be avoided, as easily as the punishments of the other world can, by due submission to the clergy, then would prisons and gallows be no hindrance to crime.

But let us go back to our question, which has been answered, and see if the answer given be correct. The answer is, I must fear *sin*, in order to prevent me from sinning. Will it be asked why I should fear sin ? Answer ; Because it will make me miserable if I commit it. There is no priest that I can apply to, who can prevent my suffering, if I am a sinner. If I fear a prison or a gallows, or a punishment in the future world, I may flatter myself that some way may be provided, by which I may escape them ; but if I fear

sin itself, I know, if I am a sinner, I must endure that evil. It is perfectly natural for a person to endeavor to avoid an evil, in proportion to its magnitude, as viewed by the mind. This being safe ground to reason on, we see at once, if we could believe that sin is the greatest evil to which we are exposed, we should be more cautious to avoid it than any other. The great and pernicious mistake, which our divines have fallen into, is that of supposing that the evil of sin is not in sin, but in a punishment which may, or may not be suffered, in the future state. It is impossible for them to exonerate themselves from having fallen into this error; for the very argument which they endeavor to maintain, and which we are now examining, is a full confession of the fact. They contend that if the fear of future punishment be removed, restraint against sin is gone. So fully confirmed are they in this most lamentable error, it is not uncommon for them to say, both in public, and in private circles, that if there be no hereafter punishment it is no matter what we do, and that if they believed in no such punishment, they would commit the worst of crimes. It is granted that they seldom go so far, unless they first become somewhat irritated in their feelings; but after all, it is only carrying out, to its full extent, the enormity of their error. What we here state we know to be true. But we do not

mention it from unkind feeling towards our brethren ; but solely for the purpose of making the merits of the subject plain to the reader.

An illustration.

As the subject we are now laboring is of the utmost consequence to the religious and moral interest of community, we feel justified in endeavoring to illustrate it to the understanding of the most feeble minds. For this purpose we will make use of a melancholy circumstance, which has greatly agitated the people of New England, and carried grief and deep sorrow into many thousands of hearts. We mean the murder which people generally believe was committed at Fall River. Perhaps few men, in their preaching of future punishment, have been more jealous than the man who the people believe committed that deed ; and as to fear from the arm of justice, in this world, the uncommon efforts which were made to throw some possible doubt on the case, show that it was great enough to accomplish any purpose that fear is capable of accomplishing. Look now at the facts of the case. Of what benefit was the doctrine of future punishment to the man, who had so long preached it, and who committed the murder ? Again ; of what use was the fear of punishment, in this world, to him who flattered himself that he could commit the murder, and yet screen himself from the penalty of the law ? It

was not in the power of the fear of future punishment, nor of punishment from the laws of the land, to prevent the crime. But had that man been half as fearful of committing that crime as he was of being found out, and punished according to the law, the poor girl, whose sad fate we deplore, would not have lost her life by his hands. Let it be understood, that it is no part of our design, in using the foregoing case, to induce any one to believe that the man who was accused was guilty, or not guilty ; but only to show that, if he was guilty, neither the fear of future punishment, nor the fear of temporal punishment, was of any avail ; while it is perfectly clear, that had the crime itself been the object of fear, he would not have committed it.

By the light in which we now stand, we see that the only fear which The evil most to be dreaded. can be sure to prevent crime, is the fear of committing it ; and therefore, that sin itself ought to be considered as the greatest evil, and the evil most to be dreaded.

The momentous truth, which we have now before us, is not altogether unknown to our clergy, who insist so much on the doctrine of future punishment, and the fear thereof, as a guard against sin ; but yet, it is a truth which they rarely point out to their hearers, and a truth, too, which seems

to give little or no direction to their doctrines or discourses.

Dr. Channing's sentiments stated.

We have noticed one instance, in Professor Stuart's Letter to Dr. Channing, in which we found the Professor to be totally inconsistent with himself; and we may now avail ourselves of a case, in which we shall find Dr. Channing to have fallen into as great an inconsistency. In his sermon on the Evil of Sin, he has done, in an able manner, excellent justice to the subject on which we are now laboring. Speaking of natural and moral evil, the Doctor says,—“By the first, I mean the pain or suffering which springs from outward condition and events, or from causes independent of the will. The latter, that is, moral evil, belongs to character and conduct, and is commonly expressed by the words, sin, vice, and transgression of the rule of right. Now I say that there is no man, unless he be singularly hardened, and an exception to his race, who, if these two classes or divisions of evil should be clearly and fully presented him in moments of calm and deliberate thinking, would not feel, through the very constitution of his mind, that sin or vice is more to be dreaded than pain. I am willing to take from among you the individual who has studied least the great question of morality and religion, whose mind has grown up with least discipline. If I place before

such a hearer two examples in strong contrast,—one, of a man gaining great property by an atrocious crime, and another, exposing himself to great sufferings through a resolute purpose of duty,—will he not tell me, at once, from a deep moral sentiment, which leaves not a doubt on his mind, that the last has chosen the better part, that he is more to be envied than the first? On these great questions, what is the chief good? and what is the chief evil? we are instructed by our own nature. An inward voice has told men, even in heathen countries, that excellence of character is the supreme good, and that baseness of soul and of action involves something worse than suffering.” A little further on, in the sermon, the Doctor says,—“I now add, in the second place, that sin, though it sometimes prospers, and never meets its full retribution on earth, yet, on the whole, produces more present suffering than all things else; so that experience warns us against sin or wrong-doing, as the chief evil we can incur.”

If we except from the foregoing quotations, what the Doctor says of the prosperity of sin, sometimes, and his assertion that it never meets its full retribution on earth, we have the sentiment for which we contend, most clearly set forth, and in a very striking manner. He takes the man who is least disciplined in morals,

In part
approved.

as an example ; and he justly contends that this man, from deep moral sentiment, which leaves not a doubt on his mind, will give the preference to virtue, though it labor under great sufferings ; to vice, notwithstanding it succeeds in obtaining great property, provided these two extremes are clearly set before him. On this indubitable fact we are willing to rest our argument. We contend that man would commit no vice, if at all times he had clearly set before him its odious character. And the Doctor allows this to hold good, even with the man who is least disciplined in morals. Let us try the Doctor's man again. We will present to his view a scheme by which he can come into possession of a great estate, by an atrocious act of wickedness ; and at the same time discover to him an act of pure justice, which moral right requires him to do, but which will subject him to severe sufferings ; will he now give the preference to virtue, do the just act, and open his bosom to the consequences, and forego the acquisition of the great estate, by an act of iniquity ? We say he will, if there be real soundness in the Doctor's argument. If, from a *deep moral principle*, the man gives the preference to virtue, he would stand the test of this last trial. If the reader should doubt our last conclusion, and think that man is too selfish a being to stand such a trial, we reply that, according to a

fact which the Doctor has laid down, the more a man is attached to himself, the more he prizes his own happiness, the more likely he would be to stand this trial; for the Doctor says, and we say so too, that 'On the whole sin produces more *present* suffering than all things else.' Is it possible that any man could choose, on selfish principles, the greater sufferings, in preference to the less? If this is possible, it would certainly be dangerous to make him believe that the greatest sufferings are in a future state! It would seem that we had now brought this subject to a fair issue. And yet it is possible that the question may arise, What is the reason that men ever do wrong? The answer is, The truth which we have, by the assistance of the Doctor's sound argument, brought to view, is not at all times realized.

But we suggested that Dr. Channing has fallen into an inconsistency; this we now proceed to make evident. What we have before excepted from what we quoted from his sermon, seems very inconsistent with the rest of the quotation; for if sin itself is "more to be dreaded than pain," it is absurd to say that it "sometimes prospers." Would it not be absurd to say that pain *prosper*s? If so, according to the Doctor's argument, it is still more absurd to say that sin, which is more to be dreaded than pain, ever *prosper*s. But he has

Dr. Channing's
inconsistency.

said more in the same sermon. For the purpose of making out a worse punishment for sin in another world, than the evil which it brings with it in this, he really inculcates the opinion that sin brings some enjoyments to the wicked, in the present life. He says, "Accordingly, sin, though, as we have seen, it produces great misery, is still left to compass many of its objects, often to prosper, often to be gain. Vice, bad as it is, has often many pleasures in its train. The worst of men partake, equally with the good, the light of the sun, the rain, the harvest, the accommodations and improvements of civilized life, and sometimes accumulate more largely outward goods. And thus sin has its pleasures, and escapes many of its natural and proper fruits!" Does this agree with the Doctor's declaration, before noticed, that, on the whole, sin produces more *present* suffering than all things else? No; it is so far from it, that it amounts to the very argument, which temptation to sin always uses to ensnare her wretched votaries! If we ask the vilest sinner what inducements have led him along in his wicked course, it would puzzle him to return a more ample reply than the Doctor has here furnished. If men could not be persuaded to believe what the Doctor has here taught, they would never seek happiness in the ways of vice and wickedness. This every candid person will ac-

knowledge. How much is it to be lamented that ministers of religion, those who are looked up to as the guardians of morality, should use the only arguments with the people, by which they can be encouraged to persevere in wrong-doing ! We would, by no means, be understood to insinuate that Dr. Channing, or any other preacher, does this unhappy work, knowing its tendency. No doubt is entertained that he designs it for the best of purposes ; but his means are at war with what he designs to effect.

In relation to the arguments we have been laboring to lay before the reader, we have selected these inconsistencies from the writings of Professor Stuart and Dr. Channing, particularly, because they are prominent leaders of the two denominations to which they belong ; and, therefore, their contradictions may be taken as a fair sample of the common preaching of these two sects. These doctors, as well as all who preach the doctrine of future punishment, have relied on the terrors of that punishment, to induce men to be pious and virtuous ; and yet they know that the most vicious and most abominable, in all Christian countries, have been brought up from childhood to believe that doctrine ; and at the same time have been educated in the belief, that sin brings many enjoyments in this world, and is attended with great

Rev. Dr. Channing and Professor Stuart a sample of the clergy at large.

prosperity in the very things which they are taught to love ; and to complete the work of iniquity, they are furnished with the means of escaping all punishment hereafter !

Thus far our investigations have been directed to ascertain, by a careful and studied reference to the moral constitution of man, and the laws by which the human mind is governed, whether true religion and genuine morality have need of the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments for their establishment and prosperity ; and we feel satisfied that the indisputable truths, which have most evidently appeared, all harmonize in their testimony against the utility of such doctrine ; and, moreover, that they show, beyond a reasonable doubt, that such doctrine and preaching are of an injurious tendency. To show, still further, this unhappy tendency, on the principles of the law of mind, on which reliance may safely be placed, we here add but one fact more. It is well known, and will be acknowledged by every candid person, that the human heart is capable of becoming soft, or hard ; kind, or unkind ; merciful or unmerciful, by education and habit. On this principle we contend, that the infernal torments, which false religion has placed in the future world, and which ministers have, with an overflowing zeal, so constantly held up to the people, and urged with all their

learning and eloquence, have tended so to harden the hearts of the professors of this religion, that they have exercised, towards their fellow-creatures, a spirit of enmity, which but too well corresponds with the relentless cruelty of their doctrine, and the wrath which they have imagined to exist in our heavenly Father. By having such an example constantly before their eyes, they have become so transformed into its image, that whenever they have had the power, they have actually executed a vengeance on men and women, which evinced that the cruelty of their doctrine had overcome the native kindness and compassion of the human heart.

CHAPTER II.

RETRIBUTION CONSIDERED IN CONNEXION WITH ANALOGY.

PROPOSITION. *That the application of analogy to this subject has never been made plain ; that much which has been said in regard to it is merely chimerical ; and that the common argument, if carried out, involves the subject in inextricable confusion.*

The argument as
drawn from
analogy.

ANOTHER ground on which the advocates of a future state of rewards and punishments place much dependence for the support of that doctrine, they denominate *analogy*. We think it too hazardous to attempt anything like an accurate statement of the particular arguments, which are made to depend on this principle, in favor of this doctrine ; for we might be liable to some mistakes, which would represent the views of its advocates differently from their mode of representing them. Our liability to misrepresent in such an attempt, seems unavoidable, on account of the fact that there has been nothing like a system of reasoning yet exhibited on the general subject. We feel safe, however, in saying, that, as far as we have been

informed, those who rely on what they call analogy to support the doctrine of future retribution, hold that in all respects, which are necessary to carry sin and its miseries into the future state, that state will be analogous to this mode of being. So that, reasoning from analogy, as moral agents sin, and thereby render themselves miserable in this world, the same moral agents may continue to do the same in the world to come. In connexion with this argument, it is urged, that as it is evident to our senses that sin often escapes a just retribution in this world, it must be recompensed in another state, or Divine Justice must forever be deprived of its claims.

On reasonings of such a character Such reasoning
mere speculation. we shall use the freedom to say, that they appear to have no higher authority than mere human speculations injudiciously managed. That they are nothing more than simple speculations, is evident from the fact that they are not founded on Divine authority. We presume that their own advocates never ventured to support them by Scripture authority. And that they are managed injudiciously is very apparent from the circumstance, that while they profess to be justified by the principle of analogy, they are a direct denial of the very analogy on which they depend. Theologians who endeavor to exert an influence over the minds of people, by means of these spec-

ulations are constantly urging that in this world we see sin procuring for its agents the riches and honors of the world, while it escapes judicial detection and goes unpunished. Now if they were consistent with their analogy and with themselves, they would see at once, that in the next state of existence sin will procure for its agents the riches and honors of that world, and there as well as here, escape judicial detection, and go unpunished. They would likewise see that as divine justice can quiet its own claims in this world without administering a full and adequate retribution of human conduct, it may do the same in the future state. In this way we might proceed and make the future state precisely like the present; for we have no more authority for carrying sin and its miseries into a future world, than we have for carrying all other things into that state which we find in this. Reasoning from all that we know, we must believe that so long as men sin they will do so from the beguiling power of temptation. If then we believe that sin will exist in the future state, we must suppose that temptations will there act on the mind with a deceiving influence. In this world the wicked are allured with the hopes of temporal gain, and these attractions are strengthened by the belief that crime will not be detected, and that punishment will be avoided. Were it not for these

hopes and allurements no wrong doing would be practised in this world ; and to suppose that we shall transgress the law of God in the future world, without any temptation, is a speculation altogether arbitrary and capricious, as well as contrary to analogy.

If we allow the doctrine of future retribution to stand on the principle of analogy we must also conclude, that as those who are called good men, and pious saints in this world, often forsake the right way, turn from the holy commandments, and fall into divers sins and temptations, and become wretched in wickedness,—so, in the future world, the saints may depart from the truth of divine rectitude, and debase themselves in the moral defilement of all manner of iniquity. It is only necessary to allow that the temptations which allure men in this world, will exist hereafter, and exert their influence there as they do here, in order to establish the opinion that saints will fall into sin in the future world, on as good authority as stands the opinion that sin will in any case be found in that state. Moreover, as it is true that in this world, many are every day becoming more reformed, and are engaging in the good work of emendation of life ; and others are seduced from virtuous sentiments and moral habits into the paths of sin and vice,—so we may expect to find the same versa-

The argument from analogy carried out.

tile state in the world to come; some growing better, and some worse, and these same changing characters and pursuits, from time to time, forever and ever.

If we allow this doctrine of analogy, we shall not only maintain that the wicked will continue to sin in the future state, but that the righteous, who may remain steadfast in holiness hereafter, and even advance continually in moral purity, will there suffer, and suffer forever, as they do in this world, the just for the unjust. This suffering is necessarily connected with the sentiments and virtues of the religion of Jesus Christ; and is now embraced in the professions of religionists of all denominations. If the pious in this world are so distressed, as they profess to be, with the apprehensions which they entertain of the future sufferings of their wicked fellow-creature, what must be their anguish hereafter, when they shall see, in awful reality, the sufferings, which they now have only in prospect! On this principle of analogy, parents, who shall be pious and holy in the world to come, will suffer forever, by beholding their own dear children pressing forward in the ways of iniquity, and suffering the dire retributions of sin. Children, also, who shall there be righteous, must suffer continually by seeing the parents, whom they love, plunging into wickedness, and enduring the torments which Divine Justice shall there inflict.

We must consider it unaccountable, why the advocates of future sin and suffering carry them into the world to come, on the principle of analogy, while they are unwilling to carry into that state the Christian virtues, on the same principle. They contend that it is entirely inconsistent with the laws of the human mind, to expect that sinners will be so changed at death as to possess hereafter no evil propensities. How, then, can they believe that death will so change the condition of the saints, that they will hereafter be entirely destitute of those Christian virtues, which are here indispensable to the Christian character, and which cause them in this world to feel so deep an interest in the reformation of the wicked? In this world, they allow that the more the Christian is like the Divine Master, the more he feels the welfare of sinners pressing on his mind, the more fervently does he plead, in his prayers, for mercy in favor of the wicked. Will death end all these holy desires, and discontinue all these fervent and gracious prayers? If so, death will effect a greater change in them, than the wicked would experience by the discontinuance of sinful propensities. Sinful propensities never have the full and cordial support of the sinner's whole mind. There is always a greater or a less reluctance in the soul that is made a captive by wicked

Analogy not carried out fully by those who hold to it.

allurements. But this is not the case with the faithful Christian, while pursuing the holy path in which divine wisdom and truth direct him. He feels no reproofs of conscience, for running too fast in the shining way of love to God and good will to man. Should he be so changed, as to feel no holy desires for the conversion and salvation of sinners, while sinners are thick around him, his change would be total. But should the sinner relinquish entirely his vicious desires, he would only conform to what his conscience always told him was his duty. If then it be unreasonable, and contrary to the laws of the human mind, to allow that man will not continue to sin, after this mortal state of flesh and blood is dissolved; it must be granted that it is far more unreasonable, and a still greater violation of the laws of the human mind, to suppose that at death those holy affections and divine exercises of the saints, which are both required and justified by the very principles of the gospel of Christ, will be discontinued, when the "earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved."

The common doctrine contradicts analogy.

In taking a general view of this weighty subject, it seems impossible to avoid surprise at the zeal which is manifested in support of the doctrine which carries sin and misery into the future state, but resigns at death all those holy feelings, those

heavenly compassions, and those merciful desires, which in this world engage the saints in the blessed cause of bringing sinners to repentance. Finding a stream so broad, so deep, and so rapid, it is natural to inquire for the fountain from which it flows. Does it flow from that God who is love? Can infinite love take pleasure in continuing sin beyond this mortal state, and in discontinuing those compassions, and that heavenly mercy, which so kindly flow towards the unhappy guilty in this world? In reasoning thus, do we reason from analogy? No; we contradict analogy. For, if in this world the love of God, in his saints, regards the wicked with pity, reasoning from analogy, we must come to the conclusion that the saints, in the future state, will exercise the same compassions towards the wicked, if there should be any in that state. In this world, the hearts of the virtuous are constantly bleeding with pity for those whose vices render them wretched. Do we reason analogically when we say that the vicious will continue their vices in the future world, but that the virtuous will there feel no compassion for them? We feel very confident that the stream whose fountain we are seeking, does not flow from that God who is love.

Does it have its origin in the gospel of Jesus, whose mission authorized him to bear our sins in his own body, to suffer, the just for the unjust, to

wash us from our sins in his own blood, to take away the sin of the world, through death to destroy him who had the power of death, and deliver those, who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage? If in this world Jesus loved sinners, and gave himself a ransom for sinners, do we reason analogically when we come to the conclusion, that by his divine authority sin is to continue in the future state, but that there he will have no compassion, no love for sinners?

Shall we find the object of our inquiry in the natural affections of the human heart? Do the sympathies of our common nature supply the stream, whose origin we seek? Ask those unhappy fathers and mothers, whose hearts have ached for many days and nights, by reason of the miseries endured by their vicious children. Will they inform us on their death-beds, that they hope soon to be free from sorrow, and see, in the coming world, the children whom they love and pity, pursuing the paths of iniquity, and suffering the torments of a righteous retribution, without feeling for them the least compassion? Is this according to analogy? Surely, we have not yet found the source of this deep and wide stream, whose waters are so rapid. Should we carefully follow this current to its fountain, we should find it coming forth from a dark cavern of iniquity, from

which divine love and heavenly wisdom are excluded. And as is the fountain, such is the stream.

The object we have in view in presenting this our reasoning on analogy to the reader, is, that it may be seen, that if this scheme be allowed, and sin and misery thereby carried into the future state, we must allow that in the future world there can be no such thing hoped for as happiness for any, without a mixture of mental pain and sorrow, which will be there increased beyond what the virtuous endure in this life, in proportion as sin and suffering may there be greater than are known in this world. If all this be consistent with the gospel and religion of Jesus, Christians have before them a most gloomy prospect.

Let us trace this analogy still further. It is well known, that in this world the wicked are constantly inflicting distressing injuries on the upright and virtuous. According to this scheme of analogy, this practice is to continue in the world to come. This seems to be necessarily embraced in the notion that sin will there be committed ; for it would be no small reformation in this world, if the wicked would confine their wrongs to their own circle, and cease to injure the innocent and the upright.

Argument from
analogy still fur-
ther examined.

Again : It is contended, by the advocates of the

doctrine which carries sin and suffering into the world to come, that the belief that there is no punishment in the future state for sin committed in this, and that sin is fully recompensed in this world where it is committed, is of a licentious tendency; that the preaching of such a sentiment is an encouragement to vice; that to dissuade the wicked from their wicked ways, it is necessary to hold up the terrors of a future state of retribution. Then, according to analogy, as soon as we find ourselves in the future world, it will then be necessary to inform those who shall be wicked there, that they are in danger of punishment in a future state. It will then be licentious to believe and teach that all punishment for sin is in that state where it will be committed. According to this analogy, sin will never be fully punished in the state in which it is committed, but the transgressor must always look into a future state for retribution. Also, as the righteous are not fully rewarded for their good works in this world, and as they are obliged to look for a full recompense hereafter, without which prospect they would have no inducement to live godly lives,—so, according to analogy, when they arrive to the future rewards, they will have no inducements to do well in that state, unless they can enjoy the prospect of being recompensed in a state beyond that.

CHAPTER III.

RETRIBUTION CONSIDERED IN CONNEXION WITH THE SCRIPTURES.

PROPOSITION. *The punishments denounced against sinners in the Bible are clearly temporal, under all the different forms of society, and to all the different classes of sinners mentioned both in the Old Testament and the New.*

HAVING extended our inquiry into the merits of the arguments in favor of a future state of retribution, which rely on analogy for their support, to as great a length as the nature of the subject seems to render necessary, we may now proceed to call the doctrine in question, by the assistance of the Scriptures, as they relate to divine retribution.

In the following inquiry respecting the punishment of sin, a constant reference will be had to certain doctrines, which are believed in the Christian church, and held to be essential to the faith of the gospel. This being embraced in our design, it may contribute to render our arguments more intelligible, if we first present the reader with a concise statement of

The prevalent doctrines defined.

those doctrines which will be called in question ; that having them in mind, he may the better judge of their soundness, by comparing them with such Scripture authority as may be presented.

1. Respecting sin and its punishment, it is believed that our Creator views it to be an infinite evil, being a violation of his infinite law ; and that nothing short of endless punishment can be its just retribution.

2. Consistently with the foregoing it is believed that the punishment of the sin which men commit in this mortal state, is not inflicted nor endured in this life, but that it will be inflicted and endured in the future, immortal state.

3. It is believed that all those of the human family, who shall finally obtain salvation by Jesus Christ, will be so forgiven their transgressions as not to be punished for them.

4. It is believed that a realizing sense of the truth of this endless punishment is indispensable to true piety, and is the proper support and defence of moral virtue. And,

5. This doctrine of endless punishment is one of the principal bonds of fellowship in the church, as no one who does not believe it, is allowed to be sound in the faith of the gospel, or a worthy member of the Christian communion.

Having these sentiments thus before us, and

keeping them in constant view, we shall proceed to the consideration of certain facts, and certain declarations of the Scriptures, inquiring, as we pass along, how such facts and declarations can be made to agree with them.

Before Adam sinned, the "Lord Case of Adam and Eve. God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." (Gen. ii. 16, 17.) The facts which relate to the subject of this divine command and threatening, and which we now wish to have considered, are the following: 1st. It must be allowed that it was, at least, as necessary for man to know before transgression what punishment would be inflicted if he should transgress, as to be informed of it after the offence had taken place. 2d. If the doctrine of endless punishment, or any punishment, in a future state, be true now, it was true when the foregoing command and threatening were communicated to Adam. 3d. If a belief in this doctrine of future punishment be now indispensable to true piety, and if it be the proper support and defence of moral virtue now, it was equally so before Adam sinned. The question then occurs, in relation to the subject, and these facts, why did not the Lord God state the doctrine of future pun-

ishment in the threatening with which he accompanied his command? In place of doing so, he mentioned no punishment but that which was to take place in the day of transgression: "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Here is no intimation of a day of judgment, at the tribunal of which Adam would be brought thousands of years after his mortal days were ended; nothing here about the intolerable pains of hell in an eternal state, about which there is so much preached in our times. How are these things to be accounted for? If sin is not punished in this state of existence, but in a future state, can any one conceive why the Lord God should have been so explicit in stating the punishment immediately in the day of transgression, and why he should have omitted to give the least intimation of its being inflicted in a future world?

Did the Creator, in this case, think it unnecessary, to present to Adam this indispensable inducement to piety, this defence and support of moral virtue?

It seems worthy of careful notice, that the Creator was as silent on the subject of future punishment, in his communication to Adam and Eve, after transgression, as he was before. After Adam had sinned, the Lord God called both the tempter and the tempted to an account immediately. He did not inform them that he had fixed

the day of their trial in eternity, in a future state of existence; but he called them to judgment immediately. To the tempter he said, "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." (Gen. iii. 14-19.) All which is here recorded, not only belongs to the present state of mortality, but is peculiar to it. Even to the tempter there is no intimation that he had exposed himself to any sufferings beyond that life which was sup-

ported by dust. He was not told that he should go on his belly and eat dust after he was dead, but all the days of his life. The Lord God gave no intimation to the woman that her sorrow or conception should be multiplied in eternity, or that she should bring forth children in sorrow in a future state, or that in that state her desire would be to her husband, or that in eternity, thousands of years after their bodies had returned to dust, he should rule over her. Nor was Adam told that the ground should be cursed for his sake in a future state, nor that it should bring forth thorns and thistles in eternity, or that in eternity he should eat the herb of the field, or that in the sweat of his face he should eat bread in a future state; but only until he returned to the ground out of which he was taken.

It seems perfectly reasonable that our professed divines, who consider the doctrine of future endless punishment so essential to piety, as such a pillar in the temple of religion, so essential for the support and defence of moral virtue, should be called on to reconcile the facts which we have noticed, embraced in the Scripture account of the first transgression, with their views. Can they inform us why the Creator did not threaten Adam with punishment in eternity, if such punishment was intended? Can they render any good reason why the Creator did not present this *pious* doc-

trine to Adam, and enforce it on his mind with as much energy as they now endeavor to enforce it? Was it because the Creator had but a small regard to the support and defence of moral virtue, that he neglected to threaten Adam with any punishment after he should return to the dust from whence he was taken? These queries they ought to solve; and then proceed to inform us what better reason there is now for them to hold up this doctrine of hereafter punishment, than there was for the Creator to make it known in the beginning.

Having noticed the first transgression, and all the retributions which Case of Cain the murderer. divine wisdom saw fit to award to the offenders, and finding them all confined to the present mortal state of man, we may pass to consider the second sin of which mention is made in the Scriptures, and the punishment with which it was visited. Many and various have been the conjectures respecting what was meant by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and about what the first transgression consisted in, various opinions have been entertained; but the second sin mentioned in the sacred records is so definitely stated, that no difference of opinion respecting it is entertained. It was the murder of Abel by his brother Cain. For this act of violence the Lord said to Cain, "The voice of thy brother's blood

crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength. A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth." (Gen. iv. 10—12.)

For this atrocious sin we are informed, in the above quoted passage, that Cain was cursed; but the curse was not put off to a future state; nor was the judgment deferred until Cain went into another world. The day of judgment came immediately, and he was doomed to his punishment without delay. The curse which was denounced on this murderer was from the ground which had received his brother's blood; and it was said to him, "*now* art thou cursed." It was not intimated to Cain that he would be called to give an account of this murder in a future state; nor was he told that he was in danger of being punished in eternity. He was not told that he should be a fugitive and a vagabond in a future state, but in the earth.

If the preachers of the present day, who so zealously contend for the doctrine of future punishment, and who attach to it those weighty consequences which we have noticed, were as circumspect as the importance of divine truth demands, it is believed that before they would proceed to sentence Cain to a state of endless

punishment, they would endeavor to render some good reason why the Creator did not, though he intends doing it hereafter ; and also why it is now any more necessary for pious, religious, or virtuous purposes, to hold up this doctrine, than it was when sin first made its appearance in the world.

We have a much more formidable Punishment of the Antediluvians. account of sin and its punishment, after the earth became extensively inhabited, than we have in the two instances which we have noticed. The case of Cain was evidently considerably advanced, as to magnitude, beyond that of his parents. It is very evident that the crime of murder committed by Cain, was more heinous in the sight of God, than was the offence of Adam and Eve. This we infer from what was denounced as retributions in the several cases. There is, indeed, some degree of similarity in these cases, but we are not informed that either Adam or Eve was cursed, or driven from the presence of the Lord, or made a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth ; but these weighty denunciations on Cain caused him to exclaim, " My punishment is greater than I can bear." This complaint we are not informed was made by Adam or Eve, or that they had an occasion thus to exclaim. Their condition, under all the inconveniences of the righteous retributions rendered

them by their compassionate Creator, was far from being intolerable.

But in the days of Noah, when men became multiplied on the earth, we are told that "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord said, I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air."—(Gen. vi. 5—7.)

This determination to destroy the whole race of man, Noah and his family excepted, on account of human transgression, evidently indicates that, in the sight of the Creator, the provocation for severe retribution was, in the case under consideration, much greater than in either of the former. Even in Cain's case, God not only spared his life, but provided for his defence, so that others should not take it. But now, wickedness has arrived to such an extent, has become so general, and wears such an aggravated character, that a besom of destruction is appointed, and men are swept from the earth. "And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man. All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land died. And every living substance was

destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven ; and they were destroyed from the earth : and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark."—(Gen. vii. 21—23.)

But in this most deplorable instance of sin, and its truly awful retribution, we find no mention of punishment in the future state. Even to righteous Noah, no hint was given that after the men of that sinful age should be destroyed by the flood from the earth, a punishment infinitely worse would be inflicted on them. Noah is said to be a "preacher of righteousness;" (2 Pet. ii. 5;) but we are not informed that he either preached the doctrine of future punishment, or believed it.

It is true that preachers of our time profess to be commissioned from heaven to preach the doctrine of future endless punishment, and to represent it with all the horrors which are frightful to human imagination. But we are persuaded that it is a duty incumbent on them, before they engage in this tremendous work, to be able to account for the entire absence of this doctrine from all the accounts we have of the sinfulness of men in Noah's time, and of their fearful destruction therefor. If the Creator saw fit not to threaten nor denounce future punishment, either in the case of Adam's or Cain's offence, because their crimes were not of

the greatest magnitude ; and had reserved the manifestation of an infinitely greater penalty for an occasion which might justify its severity, we should suppose that such an occasion had occurred in the wickedness of the people in Noah's day, if such ever existed. If it be allowed that the doctrine of future punishment is such a principal support and defence of piety and moral virtue, as it is supposed to be by its advocates, does it not lead to the conclusion that the sin of Adam, the murder committed by Cain, and the vast aggregate of iniquity which condemned the old world to entire destruction, might have been nearly, if not wholly prevented, by a full and clear manifestation of this salutary doctrine ? In the light of these circumstances, and the reflections suggested by them, it seems altogether unaccountable why no intimation should have been given of this doctrine in the accounts which we have already noticed.

Punishment of
Sodom and
Gomorrhah.

According to Bible chronology, more than sixteen hundred years after the creation of man had passed away, when the Creator manifested his disapprobation of man's sinfulness in the destruction of the world by the flood ; still do we find no evidence that he had yet seen fit to make his creatures acquainted with the danger they were in, according to the opinion we are considering, of being forever pun-

ished after death. The loss of life was the extent of the retribution for transgression, of which any mention is made in Scripture record, up to this time.

We may now notice the remarkable account of the sinfulness of Sodom, and the cities of the plain, together with the truly awful destruction by which they were overthrown. By the account of this memorable case, we are informed that these cities were destroyed by fire from heaven, for the sinfulness of their inhabitants. Let this be kept in mind, while we carefully examine the record, to see if any mention be made of punishing these abominable, sinful people after they were consumed in the flames of their cities. After the angels had brought Lot and his wife and his daughters out of Sodom, one of them said to Lot, "Escape for thy life ; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain ; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."—(Gen. xix. 17.) In this most alarming crisis, when the angel of God was urging Lot to make his escape from danger, it was for his life only. No mention was made of any danger to which his immortal soul was exposed in eternity, whether he left the city or stayed in it. And concerning Lot's wife, who, heedless of the angel's express command not to look behind her, looked back, and was turned into a pillar of salt, there is no mention of her being punished in a future state.

Respecting the destruction of those cities, we read, "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom, and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground."—(Gen. xix. 24, 25.) Here we find no intimation concerning any punishment inflicted on those wretched sinners in a future state. More than two thousand years had now passed away after man was created ; four very particular accounts are recorded of instances of very heinous transgressions, and also of due retributions inflicted by God himself, and yet no hint is recorded of any punishment after man's mortal state was ended. No, the time had not yet come in which the all-wise Creator saw fit to induce man to be pious and virtuous by the influence of the doctrine of a future state of retribution.

Punishment of the Egyptians. A few years before the overthrow of Sodom, we are informed that God communicated to Abraham certain things which were to take place respecting his descendants in the then future ages ; some of which we may notice as having a relation to our present subject. "And he said unto Abraham, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them ; and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that

nation whom they shall serve, will I judge ; and afterwards shall they come out with great substance.”—(Gen. xv. 13, 14.) This prophetic declaration was evidently fulfilled by the sojourning of the Israelites in Egypt, the hard servitude to which they were subjected, and the memorable plagues which a judicial Providence brought on their oppressors. Of these circumstances, two will be here noticed, as particularly relative to our present inquiry. The first we shall notice is the time when God judged the Egyptians, and punished them for their cruel oppressions. According to the common doctrine concerning a day of general judgment at the end of this natural world, and in a future state, we should expect to find that the judgment of the Egyptians would take place at that time. If not in this world, but in the next, the sins of men are to be judged, God has not yet judged that nation which oppressed Israel. But if we are careful to understand the divine declaration above cited, we must duly notice that God judged that nation *before* the Israelites left Egypt ; for the text says, “ And also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge ; and afterwards shall they come out with great substance.” Thus we find that the day of judgment, in which God rendered to the oppressors of the descendants of his servant Abraham, the just retributions which their unrighteous oppressions deserved, was before Israel went out of Egypt.

The second particular in the circumstances of this case, which we shall here notice, regards the nature of the retribution rendered. This inquiry brings into view the plagues with which Pharaoh was threatened, and which his hardness of heart and stubborn rebellion against God, brought upon him and his people.

The plagues which Moses and Aaron were authorized to announce to Pharaoh, to induce him to let the Hebrews go out of his land, and which were actually brought on the Egyptians, though they were fearful signs and grievous judgments, were all of a temporal nature, were inflicted on the people and on the land in the sight of living men, and were all ended before Israel left Egypt. The river Nile and all the waters of the land were turned to blood ; frogs were sent in judgment ; lice also ; flies, and murrain on cattle ; boils breaking forth with blains ; a grievous hail mingled with fire ; locusts ; darkness, and the first-born of the Egyptians slain. These ten fearful judgments seemed to exhaust the treasures of wrath which had accumulated against the Egyptians in consequence of the cruel bondage imposed on the Hebrews, and in consequence of their unmerciful oppressions. But what are all these in comparison with the terrors of the day of judgment, which are now announced by the Christian doctors ! and what are they when compared with the endless sufferings which

these doctors say they are authorized to hold up to the people, as inducements to piety, religion and virtue !

Was it because Pharaoh and his people had sinned so little, that God threatened them with no punishment in the future world ? and was it because their wickedness was so slight that nothing but temporal judgments were inflicted ? Will our doctors plead that in those times, of which we are now speaking, piety, religion, and moral virtue could be supported by milder and more gentle means than in our days ? Or will they attempt to assign some good reason why the Creator should then withhold the only means which he knew would ever prove efficacious in turning men from their wicked ways to serve him ? Two thousand five hundred years, and more, had passed away, from the time man was created to the time of the plagues and judgments of Egypt ; Adam's transgression had received the retribution which God threatened, Cain's murder had been punished by God himself, the old world for its abominations had been swept from the face of the earth, Sodom and the cities of the plain, for their wickedness, had been overthrown by fire from God out of heaven ; and now is fulfilled the ten-fold vengeance of Heaven on sinful Egypt, and yet not one allusion to a future state of punish-

*Recapitulation
of the foregoing
arguments.*

ment! We know that our doctors profess to be fully authorized to doom Pharaoh to a state of endless punishment, and that they quote the word of God to him, in support of their judgment in the case. See Exodus ix. 15, 16: "For now will I stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." It is true that our doctors are too cautious to attempt to prove that they have any authority for applying this passage to the support of punishment in another world; and if they were half as prudent in their endeavors to understand its true sense, they would see, at once, that in place of ever alluding to punishment hereafter, *pestilence*, which was inflicted in this state, is specified in the text, and it is asserted that Pharaoh should be "cut off from the earth." This is the extent, the utmost reach of retribution. And it is of importance to remark that the whole was ordered by the Divine Being, not for the purpose of making his vengeance known and felt in the eternal world, but to make his power and name known and "declared throughout all the earth."

We shall not release our doctors from what we deem their duty in respect to our general subject.

We do most solemnly demand of them to assign some satisfactory reason for the entire omission of their indispensable doctrine of future retribution for so long a time. They will not allow that men can be duly prepared for happy existence hereafter, unless they fully believe in this doctrine. How then was it in those times to which we have alluded? Did all who lived and died in those ancient times, leave the world unprepared to meet their final Judge! Even the doctrine of a general judgment, in the future state, is nowhere hinted in a single passage relating to the wickedness of mankind in those ages. When the Creator called Adam and Eve to an account, and pronounced on them such retributions as his wisdom dictated, he did not inform them that the final judgment of their conduct was reserved for a future world. So likewise when Cain, for the murder of his brother, was judged and condemned, and when the retributions of divine justice were specified, he was not informed that all this was only a foretaste of something future, and that he must await his trial at the general judgment, when, in a future state, all mankind would be brought to judgment. Nor have we any information which would justify the belief that Noah ever informed the wicked people of his day, who were destroyed by the flood, that they would have to answer for their sins at the

bar of God in a future state, after the approaching flood should take them away. A similar neglect is evident in the account we have noticed concerning the judgment of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim; no intimation was given that another trial, another day of judgment, awaited the inhabitants of these cities, in a future state. So also, in all that is said to Pharaoh, and of the punishment of his iniquities and the sins of his people, no hint is given that they would be brought to another trial in a future world, for which occasion God had reserved the most severe of his judgments. So far from this, God said to him, Exodus ix. 14: "For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth." This is a very different doctrine from that which teaches that God reserves infinitely worse plagues for men in a future state, than any they endure in this.

If a more genuine piety, a more refined morality, could have been produced by a knowledge of this doctrine of future judgment, of future rewards and punishments, than existed in those ancient times, it was certainly needed for the moral and religious improvement of righteous Noah and Lot, the blemishes in whose characters might thereby have been prevented. But it

is believed that a judicious comparison between the piety and virtue of these men, and the piety and virtue of those who are rendered religious in our times by the influence of this doctrine, would result neither to the advantage of the latter, nor to the support of the pretended claims of this doctrine.

We may now take our leave of Egypt, and travel with God's chosen people towards the earthly Canaan, in hope that if any improvement is to be made in religious and moral instruction, if the wisdom of God is pleased to add more severe sanctions to his law, than in former times, if now the time has arrived when a future retribution, in all the horrors in which our doctors have dressed it, is about to be manifested to his own chosen people, we may find it, understand it, and avail ourselves of its advantages.

*Punishment
denounced on the
children of Israel.*

Let us go with Moses and the congregation of Israel to the fearful mount from whence the law was given. Surely the cloud that rests on this Sinai, that cloud from which such thunders roll, in which such lightnings blaze, must contain the whole artillery of retributive vengeance. We shall now learn, no doubt, the mind of God respecting the demerit of sin and the severity of its just punishment. We can hardly expect to go from this mountain ignorant of those divine sanctions which will best

*Penalty of the law
given on Sinai.*

serve the cause of piety, religion, and moral virtue. The lightnings have flashed! the thunders have rolled! God has spoken! The verdict of Heaven is registered! Come, ye doctors, who insist that neither judgment or punishment is in this world—and who, without hesitation, doom your fellow-sinners to endless woe,—come and read the following verdict: “Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.”—(Exodus xxi. 23—25.) All this is evidently in this world, where life can be taken, where eyes can be destroyed, where teeth can be extracted, where hands and feet can be amputated, where burnings, wounds, and stripes can be inflicted.

Will it be contended that the retributions which are here specified are those only which God has authorized men to render to their offending fellow-men; but that he reserves to himself the office of inflicting retributions infinitely more severe? We will then bring to view the punishments which God told his people that he himself would inflict upon them for their stubbornness, and their rebellion against him and his statutes. And here we beseech the reader to look carefully, having reference to two questions; first, Is there, in all the dreadful account, any intimation of punishment in a future state? secondly, Is it possible

to conceive of sufferings more severe, that can be suffered in the present state, than those which are here described? "But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; and if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant; I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass. And your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits. And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues among you, according to your sins. I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your highways

shall be desolate. And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me ; then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins. And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant ; and, when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you ; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight : and ye shall eat and not be satisfied. And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me ; then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury ; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat. And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you. And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savor of your sweet odors. And I will bring the land into desolation ; and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you ; and your land shall be desolate, and

your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her Sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her Sabbaths. As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your Sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it. And upon them that are left alive of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth. And they shall fall one upon another, as it were before a sword, when none pursueth; and ye shall have no power to stand before your enemies. And ye shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them."—(Lev. xxvi. 14—39.) Will the advocates of future judgment and retribution carefully survey all these specifications of punishment, and deliberately consider the intensity of their severity, and then gravely say that God does neither judge nor punish the wicked in this world? In the scripture just cited, God says, verse 21: "I will bring seven times more plagues upon you, according to your sins." Will any one be bold enough, while this passage is in view, to assert

that no punishment endured in this mortal state is according to men's sins ?

However important the doctrine of future retribution may be, however essential to promote and defend true piety, religion and morality, however dangerous it may be to the souls of men not to believe in this doctrine, we find we are now compelled to leave Moses, Sinai, and the law given to God's covenant people, without obtaining the least information concerning it ? All the support which the wisdom of God saw fit to give to piety, religion and morality, by means of punishment, was derived from sufferings endured in this mortal state. It is not in this ministration of death and condemnation, that we find the doctrine of punishment in the future state ; if we ever find it, we must find it in the more glorious ministration of the spirit of righteousness, in which Jesus, our great high priest, " is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." But who will ever believe that the dispensation of the gospel exhibits punishments for sin more lasting and more severe than are announced in the law ?

Temporal judgment
only denounced
under the judges.

If we examine the divine testimony concerning the Judges of Israel, we shall learn that as late as was Jotham's curse pronounced and executed on the murderous Abimelech and the sinful Shechem-

ites and house of Millo, temporal punishment is said to be a full retribution even for the most heinous offences. Of the seventy sons of Jerubbaal, Jotham alone escaped the murderous and bloody hands of Abimelech, who was made king by the Shechemites, who thus supported him in his wickedness. Jotham, as soon as he was informed of the tragical death of his brethren, and that the murderer was made king, went and stood in the top of Mount Gerizim, and after reproving the Shechemites for their madness and impolicy in one of the best and most ingenious parables ever written, he pronounced the following curse : " Let fire come out from Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo ; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech." —(Judges ix. 20.) This curse of Jotham was not long delayed ; it was not put off to a future state ; in about three years from the day Abimelech was made king, " God sent an evil spirit between him and the men of Shechem ; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech ; that the cruelty done to the three-score and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother which slew them, and upon the men of Shechem which aided them in the killing of his brethren."—(Verses 23, 24.) This treachery soon kindled the flame of open war,

and terminated in the destruction of Shechem and its inhabitants, and in the death of Abimelech. "Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren. And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads; and upon them came the curse of Jotham, the son of Jerubbaal."—(Judges ix. 56, 57.)

According to the doctrine of future retribution, which we now have under consideration, if God had rendered *all* the iniquity of Abimelech on his head, and *all* the evil of the men of Shechem upon their heads, they must all have been condemned to endless sufferings, in the hell which that doctrine teaches; but there is not the least intimation that in the retributions of divine justice, which were executed on those vile transgressors, any infliction was extended into the future state. It seems reasonable to ask in this place, why God should inspire Jotham to announce the curse which we have seen that God executed on those murderers, and yet withhold from him all knowledge concerning a curse which is infinitely more durable and indescribably more severe, if such were contained in the treasures of divine retribution? The divines of our times, who believe and preach future retribution, confidently threaten people with its terrors, though, so far from being such atrocious murderers as were Abimelech and

the Shechemites, they have committed no open violation of the wholesome laws of civil society in their lives, and are kind husbands and wives, provident fathers and mothers, dutiful children, loving brothers and sisters, trusty and obliging neighbors and friends. How shall we account for these excessive terrors, under the gracious dispensation of the gospel of man's salvation, which infinitely transcend all the most terrible denunciations of that law which is emphatically styled the ministration of condemnation ?

While passing in review the re-
cords of retributive justice, respecting
instances wherein God himself is accuser, judge
and executioner, we are induced to bestow some
particular attention on the fearful case of King
Ahab. To the crime we are now about to con-
sider Ahab was but an accessory ; Jezebel, his
wife, was the principal. The specifications of
the case are as follows :—" Naboth the Jezreelite
had a vineyard which was in Jezreel, hard by the
palace of Ahab, king of Samaria. And Ahab
spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vine-
yard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs,
because it is near unto my house, and I will give
thee for it a better vineyard than it ; or, if it seem
good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in
money. And Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord
forbid it me that I should give the inheritance of

Punishment of
King Ahab.

my fathers unto thee. And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased, because of the word Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him ; for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers ; and he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread. But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread ? And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money ; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it ; and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard. And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou not govern the kingdom of Israel ? Arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry ; I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders, and to the nobles that were in the city dwelling with Naboth. And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people ; and set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king : and then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die."—(1 Kings xxi.) These iniquitous orders were immediately obeyed by the elders and nobles of Jezreel, who held the

favours of Ahab's court in higher esteem than they did that pure and holy justice which forbids false accusation and violence; and Naboth was condemned in a mock trial, under the specious pretence of religious zeal, and cruelly stoned by a lawless mob, that he died. Information was sent to Jezebel that Naboth was dead, when she said to Ahab, " Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money; for Naboth is not alive but dead." Well pleased with these tidings, the king went to take possession of the coveted vineyard. But the righteous Judge of all the earth sent his prophet Elijah to meet him on the very spot where he had fondly anticipated the enjoyment of a garden of herbs, and authorized him to announce to the ears of this murderous king the following righteous sentence: " In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. . . . Because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord, Behold I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity. . . . And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha, the son of Abijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin. And of Jezebel spake the Lord, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the walls of Jezreel. Him

that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat ; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat." Not far from one year after the murder of Naboth, and the annunciation of the divine judgment against these royal offenders for the crime they had committed, Ahab was mortally wounded in a battle which he fought at Ramoth in Gilead, with the King of Syria. " So the king died, and was brought to Samaria ; and they buried the King in Samaria. And one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood, and they washed his armor according unto the word of the Lord which he spake."—(1 Kings xxii. 37, 38.) In about thirteen years after the dogs licked the blood of Ahab according to the word of the Lord, Jezebel was eaten by dogs according to the same sentence ; for Jehu conspired against king Joram, the son of Ahab, and slew him, and ordered Jezebel to be thrown from her window into the street, where she was trodden under foot by the horses of Jehu's troops, and eaten by dogs. When it was told Jehu what had become of Jezebel, he said, " This is the word of the Lord, which he spoke by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall the dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel ; and the carcass of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel ; so that they shall say, this is Jezebel."—(2 Kings ix. 36, 37.)

We have here set before the reader a very short account of the wickedness of King Ahab and his wife Jezebel, in relation to the cruel murder of Naboth ; but it should be noticed that these two offenders were notoriously wicked in their general conduct, and that the sentence of divine vengeance against them was a judicial retribution for their offences. However hard it may be for our divines of the present day, who advocate the doctrine of future retribution, and who contend that sin is not fully punished in this world where it is committed, to be told that the divine sentence which we have just noticed, and which was executed on Ahab and his wife Jezebel, was all which the wisdom of God has seen fit to have recorded for our admonition, they will search in vain to find any authority in the Scriptures for their being punished in a future state.

How widely different was the conduct of the prophet Elijah, who was sent to meet Ahab, and to deliver to him that message from God, which unwavering justice dictated, from the conduct of our divines, who preach the terrors of future retribution ! In place of informing the royal murderer that he had exposed his immortal soul to the vengeance of an offended God, and that he was in danger of being cast into a lake of fire and brimstone hereafter, as a just retribution for his wickedness, the legate of heaven, in a manner as

pointed and severe as it was solemn and awful, told him, "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. . . . The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel." As wide as this difference appears, it is fully equalled by that which exists between the terrors of the two doctrines. Let a clergyman, for instance, address a murderer with the terrors of future damnation, and tell him if he does not repent before he dies, he will go to hell hereafter; and, out of civility to the divine, he may treat him with respect, but nothing more; but place this felon at the bar of justice, and let him hear his sentence of death pronounced by the judge, and strange terrors will agitate his fragile frame, and deathly paleness will speak the apprehensions of his heart! What men can realize as matter of certainty, can never fail of exerting an influence on the mind, which will always correspond with its importance; but mere imaginary terrors, however vivid may be the color in which they are painted, will exert an uncertain and doubtful influence, corresponding with their own uncertainty, while various means of avoiding harm will be sure to neutralize their whole power.

The argument
enforced.

We must not forget to consider the fact that at the time the divine sentence of retribution was announced to Ahab, more than three thousand years had passed away, after

the creation of man, and yet it had not seemed good in the sight of God to reveal to his children this sin-preventing, soul-saving doctrine of future punishment! Who will tell us why God should withhold the knowledge of a doctrine from man, which is now thought to be a main pillar in the temple of true religion, and the principal bulwark which defends those moral virtues that constitute the felicities of life? Was not sin as hateful to God, was not righteousness as precious in his sight, was not the salvation of immortal souls as important, in ancient as in modern times? If the future and eternal welfare of man can be secured only by the terrors of endless misery, why should that kind Creator, who gave to the ancients the same sun, the same moon, as constant seed-times and harvests, as to us, have withheld from them these more needful terrors, yet deal them out on us so profusely? Will not millions of poor wretched immortals, doomed to endless sufferings for going out of this world destitute of those preparations, which depend on a belief in the doctrine of future retribution, mingle some faint murmurs, at least, with their groans, that they were not provided with these indispensable means of preparation in their day? If it be said that righteous Noah, Lot, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets will tell them that they were prepared for eternal happiness without any knowledge of

this doctrine of future retribution, it will amount to a full concession that a belief in this doctrine is not absolutely necessary to such desirable preparation.

Punishment of the
Ammonites.

As it is contended that God has not seen fit to judge and reward men in this world, according to their works; but has appointed to judge them after death, and to punish them for their wickedness in the future eternal state, we will, with this opinion, contrast the divine testimony recorded by Ezekiel: "And thou, son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord God, concerning the Ammonites, and concerning their reproach; even say thou, The sword, the sword is drawn; for the slaughter it is furbished; . . . shall I cause it to return into his sheath? I will judge thee in the place where thou wast created, in the land of thy nativity. And I will pour out mine indignation upon thee; I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath, and deliver thee into the hands of brutish men, and skilful to destroy. Thou shalt be for fuel to the fire; thy blood shall be in the midst of the land; thou shalt be no more remembered; for I the Lord have spoken it."—(Ezekiel xxi. 28, &c.) We have here the divine testimony that God would judge the wicked Ammonites *in the place where they were created*; that their punishment should be in their land, and should be executed by

brutish men, who should be skilful to destroy. The Ammonites were not created in a future state, nor was the land of their nativity in a future state, nor will any one pretend that God will deliver the Ammonites into the hands of brutish men, in a future state, to be there destroyed by them. Yet all this punishment is said to be executed in God's wrath, and in the fire of his indignation. If it was consistent with the moral government of the Ruler of the universe to judge and punish the idolatrous Ammonites in this world, and in their own land, it is difficult to see why it is not equally consistent with this Divine government to judge all nations, and every individual of the human family, and to recompense them according to their deserts, in this present state.

After stating, in the foregoing explicit manner, the judgment of the Ammonites, the prophet, in the next chapter, as explicitly states the execution of the divine indignation against God's covenant people; and he lays the scene in the city of Jerusalem. After having set forth, in a long catalogue of specifications, the crimes and abominations of the house of Israel, he thus proceeds: "And the word of the Lord came Punishment of the Jews in Jerusalem. unto me, saying, Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross; all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead in the midst

of the furnace ; they are even the dross of silver. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it ; so will I gather you in mine anger, and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof ; and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you.”—(Ezekiel xxii. 17, &c.)

It is worthy of notice that the prophet is as particular here in stating the place where the house of Israel should suffer the execution of divine wrath, as he was in stating the place where the Ammonites should suffer it. The Ammonites were to suffer for their iniquities in their own land ; and the house of Israel were to suffer their punishment in Jerusalem.

To us an important query here arises : As it is contended by our divines, that all the sufferings which men endure in this world, are nothing in comparison with the punishment which they are taught to expect in a future state, why are the

former so particularly set forth, and the places where they were to be endured designated, so that no mistake can be made ; and yet are we not favored with any description of the latter ? If in any part of the divine writings we could find as particular a description of a future state of punishment, as we have seen of the punishment of those whom we have passed in review in this inquiry, there would exist no doubt concerning it. But neither Moses nor any of the prophets ever attempted to give any relation concerning this future retribution, which now constitutes one of the principal pillars of religion, and an indispensable article in the Christian faith.

In his description of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah Jeremiah's description of the punishment of the Jews. compares the punishment of the sin of the daughter of his people with the punishment of the sin of Sodom, and says that the former was greater than the latter. Let the reader carefully consult the following most eloquent description : "How is the gold become dim ! how is the most fine gold changed ! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street. The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter ! Even the sea-monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones : the daughter of

my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst : the young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them. They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets : they that were brought up in scarlet, embrace dunghills. For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her. Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire : their visage is blacker than a coal ; they are not known in the streets : their skin cleaveth to their bones ; it is withered, it is become like a stick. They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger ; for these pine away stricken through for want of the fruits of the field. The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children ; they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people. The Lord hath accomplished his fury ; he hath poured out his fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof. The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of

Jerusalem.”—(Lam. iv. 1—12.) Although language and the tongue of the most eloquent would fail in the attempt to set forth the suffering of mortals to a greater degree than is here described, yet there is no intimation, in this description, of punishment in a future state. The prophet assures us that these sufferings were in Jerusalem and in Zion, and that they were the accomplishment of the fierce anger and the fury of the Lord. If we carefully consider the language we have quoted from Ezekiel and Jeremiah, in which they set forth the awful retributions of divine justice, all which they confined to this life and this mortal state, it will at once occur to our recollection that there are no expressions used in any part of the sacred writings, which indicate terrors more fearful, or sufferings more intense.

Should preachers of our times, who profess to believe that the prophets of Israel, whose testimony we have just considered, were inspired by the Divine Spirit to announce the retributions of justice against the transgressors of their times, follow their example, and confining all the punishments which they should hold up to the people, to the present state, exert all their wisdom and discernment to understand the effects of wickedness of all descriptions, and to set them forth in their true colors, they would certainly be a very different

Modern preachers
not like the
Jewish prophets.

kind of preachers from what they now are ; and, we believe, a much more profitable kind of preachers. But what would our Christian congregations think, should they, in place of hearing from the pulpits the usual and fashionable denunciations of eternal punishment in the invisible world, for the follies and crimes of this life, hear the natural and necessary tendency of every species of wrong-doing clearly pointed out, and enforced with all the powers of that eloquence which is employed in the usual way, but not a word about a future state of punishment ? Should such a change take place, if violent excitements should be discontinued, if religious fanaticism should cease to produce its frequent paroxysms, and if none were made mad with the fears of everlasting torment, it is confidently believed that vice would be more detested than it now is, and that virtue would have more sincere admirers.

Notwithstanding these remarks are already protracted beyond what was at first contemplated, we are unwilling to bring them to a close without noticing how exactly the preaching of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, corresponded with the testimony of the prophets which we have considered.

Punishment as denounced by the Son of God on the Jews.

When the divine teacher denounced the judgments of heaven on the most perverse and abominable people that

ever our world produced, the dark, portentous cloud of vengeance, which had been gathering for ages, had then acquired such a density as to hang visibly over the land. He saw the cloud, and wept over Jerusalem, knowing that her fearful destruction drew nigh. Accordingly, he limited all his dreadful denunciations to the generation in which he lived. The following are some of his declarations on this subject : " Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it : and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels ; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."—(Matt. xvi. 24—28.) " Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell ? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes ; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them

from city to city ; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickēns under her wings, and ye would not ! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”—(Matt. xxiii. 32—39.) “ Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation ; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.”—(Mark viii. 37 ; ix. 1.) “ For whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels. But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see

the kingdom of God.”—(Luke ix. 26, 27.) “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. And he spake to them a parable: Behold the fig-tree and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own-

selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled."—(Luke xxi. 20—32.) "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heaven shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig-tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know the summer is nigh; so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."—(Matt. xxiv. 29—34.)

Modern preachers
not like
the Lord Jesus.

If Jesus, like modern preachers, had believed that in this state of being God neither judged nor rewarded men according to their works; but that in a future state he hath appointed a general judgment, and will in eternity punish, with unspeakable

severity, those who do wickedly in this world, would he have been so very particular to limit all the denunciations of divine wrath, which he announced to his enemies, to the generation in which he lived? Had Jesus been of the opinion that a belief in this future and eternal retribution was indispensable to the cause of true piety, religion and morality, would he not have preached as our divines now do, and brought that hell, in which our preachers believe, and which they constantly hold up to the people, directly before the eyes of the multitudes who attended on his preaching? If it be said that Jesus did threaten the wicked with hell fire, we say that we have no proof that he ever used any words by which he meant to express what our preachers mean by the word hell.

CHAPTER IV.

A CONSIDERATION OF THE PROMINENT PASSAGES WHICH ARE THOUGHT TO TEACH RETRIBUTION.

Hell-fire, in Matt.
v. 22.

By those, in our times, who endeavor to maintain that where Jesus used the phrase, "A gehenna of fire," rendered by our translators, "hell fire," (Matt. v. 22,) he meant to designate a place of torment in the future state, it is argued that this must have been his meaning, because he knew that the Jews, to whom he spoke, were in the habit of using the same phrase for this purpose. To this reasoning we state the following objections: 1st. To support the fact, on which they rest this argument, they have never been able to produce anything like undoubted authority. And why they should feel satisfied to rest a doctrine of such immense importance on authority which, at any rate, must be considered doubtful, is very questionable. It is by no means certain that the Jews, in our Saviour's time, were in the habit of using the word *Gehenna* to signify a place of future misery.

2d. If we look at the passage Examination of the
where this word is found, and exam-
ine it with suitable candor, it is believed that we
shall be fully satisfied that Jesus did not mean to
speak of a state of torment in the future world.
See verses 21, 22: "Ye have heard that it was
said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill;
and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of
the judgment; but I say unto you, that whosoever
is angry with his brother without a cause shall be
in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall
say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the
council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall
be in danger of hell fire." Now, no candid per-
son will pretend that Jesus meant to designate a
future state of punishment by being in danger
either of the judgment, or of the council. But if
by these he did not mean to point out a future
state of sufferings, but alluded to temporal suffer-
ings only, it must appear strangely extravagant
to suppose that by the last he meant a state of
sufferings in the future world. The first crime
is that of being angry with a brother without a
cause; the second is that of saying to a brother,
Raca; the third is that of calling a brother a
fool. Will any candid person pretend that there
is such an infinite difference between the two
first of these offences, and the last, that temporal
punishments were suitable to be inflicted for the

two first, but that nothing short of the torments of that hell, in which our clergy believe, are suitable to the last? Such a conclusion, we think, but a few candid minds, after deliberate consideration, will adopt.

Dr. A. Clarke's
opinions.

Dr. Adam Clarke, a believer in future punishment, is candid enough to allow that the passage under consideration had no allusion to sufferings out of this world. On the text he says,—“It is very probable, that our Lord means no more here than this: If a man charge another with apostacy from the Jewish religion, or rebellion against God, and cannot prove his charge, then he is exposed to that punishment, (burning alive,) which the other must have suffered if the charge had been substantiated. There are three kinds of offences here, which exceed each other in their degrees of guilt. 1, Anger against a man, accompanied with some injurious act. 2, *Contempt*, expressed by the opprobrious epithet, *Raca*, or shallow brains. 3. *Hatred*, and *mortal enmity*, expressed by the term *moreh*, or *apostate*, when such apostacy could not be proved. Now, proportioned to these three offences, were three different degrees of punishment, each exceeding the other in severity, as the offences exceeded each other in their different degrees of guilt. 1, *The Judgment*, the Council of twenty-three, which could inflict the punish-

ment of strangling. 2, The Sanhedrim, or Great Council, which could inflict the punishment of *stoning*. 3, The being burnt alive in the valley of the Son of Hinnom. This appears to be the meaning of our Lord."

The learned Parkhurst says, in his Parkhurst's opinion. Greek and English Lexicon, on the phrase "*geenna tou puros*, a gehenna of fire,— (Matt. v. 22,) does, I apprehend, in its *outward* and *primary* sense, relate to that dreadful doom of being *burnt alive in the valley of Hinnom*." This lexicographer also was a believer in future punishment. We quote these authors, whose biblical learning is highly esteemed, by the clergy of all denominations, not because we think them always correct in their opinions, but because, as they were believers in a future state of punishment, they would not have applied the text under consideration, to any punishment endured in this world, if they could have been justified in applying it to the hell, in the future world, in which they believed.

Mr. Whitman, in the work he en- Rev. B. Whitman's remark. titles, "Friendly Letters to a Universalist,"* recently published, contends, with much

* Whitman's Letters to a Universalist, were published in June, 1833. Mr. Whitman's biographer (p. 104) attributes the production of these letters to "an attack from a Mr. Paige, the Universalist minister in Cambridgeport." The Mr. Paige, here mentioned as if scarcely known, is the Rev. L. R. Paige,

more spirit than humility, on p. 170, that Jesus was either a fool, or a liar, if he made use of the phrase "A gehenna of fire," to signify punishment in the valley of Hinnom! To us, it seems somewhat remarkable, that he should have inserted the word *fool*, as that is the very word, in the text, which he contends places him who uses it in danger of the future punishment for which he contends. This reminds us of the words of the Saviour to his disciples, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." For humanity's sake, and for his sake, and for mercy's sake, we hope his doctrine is not true. But we have but little

at present of the same place. Mr. P. had published a review of Mr. Whitman's *Village Sermons*, in which he pointed out some gross sophistries. Mr. W. evidently felt wounded; and his bitterness flowed when he wrote his *Letters to a Universalist*. This last named work is proof of Mr. Whitman's superficial manner. The grossest sophistries and misstatements abound in it. So evident was this, that his brother, in a biographical notice, felt called on to say, "This volume was prepared under unfavorable circumstances, and written in great haste, and without opportunity for reëxamination. Mr. Whitman sent to the printer each morning what he had written during the previous day. Under these circumstances it will not be thought strange that the volume should contain some arguments which are weak or sophistical, and which the author himself would upon further reflection have rejected." *Memoir of Whitman*, p. 104. In a short time after the appearance of the *Letters to a Universalist*, Mr. Balfour published his "Reply to Rev. Bernard Whitman on the term Gehenna," a work that completely exposed the inaccuracies, mistakes and sophistries of Mr. W. on that point.

doubt that he endures the very anguish of soul, which we believe Jesus meant to represent, symbolically, by the phrase "*A Gehenna of fire.*" This agrees with our views of the use of Gehenna by James, ch. iii. 6: "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of Gehenna." Mr. Whitman allows, on p. 172, that Jesus sometimes used the word Gehenna to signify spiritual punishment in this world; but seems not to realize that by this concession he put it out of his power to prove that he ever used it to designate a punishment in the future state. Nor does he prove that spiritual punishment, in this world, was not meant, by the Saviour, in the passage we have noticed.

By an attentive perusal of the argument of the Saviour, in Matt. v., True import of the passage. in which this passage is found, we are satisfied that the divine teacher designed to inform his disciples, that in the spiritual government of the kingdom of heaven, here on earth, cognizance would be taken of crimes, which should consist in the wickedness of the heart, though no overt act were committed; and that he made use of legal punishment symbolically, to indicate the mental sufferings to which the sinfulness of the heart would subject men. And we believe that who-

ever will candidly examine Matt. v. from the 17th verse to the 30th, inclusive, will be of our opinion. "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."—(Heb. iv. 12, 13.)

Sustained by the
context.

It ought to be kept in mind, that when Jesus used the phrase, "A Gehenna of fire," in the passage in Matt. v. 22, and several times more in the same discourse, he was speaking, not to the Scribes and Pharisees, nor to the Jews, as a people, but to his disciples; and that he was giving them spiritual instruction, which related to his own kingdom of divine righteousness. To be satisfied of this fact, the reader may commence with the chapter, and its truth will at once appear. In the fore part of this chapter, Jesus taught his disciples the character of that righteousness which is indispensable in his gospel kingdom, or kingdom of heaven. He gave them to understand that unless their righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they could not enter into the kingdom of heaven. The righteousness of

the Scribes and Pharisees consisted in a very scrupulous observance of the rites and outward duties of the law of Moses and the priesthood of Aaron; but Jesus informed them that they had omitted the weightier matters of the law, such as judgment, mercy and faith. These weightier matters were required by Jesus of his disciples, and constituted that righteousness which was required in his spiritual kingdom; in which kingdom his apostles were constituted kings and priests unto God. In this spiritual kingdom or government, there must be a spiritual discipline that would take cognizance of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and faithfully administer to every man a righteous retribution. The judgment seat of Christ is in the heart of every Christian. Before this tribunal all his thoughts are laid open. If he allows himself to be angry with a brother, contrary to the law of Christ, he feels a corresponding condemnation; if he utter a word to his brother which is a violation of this spirit of love, a corresponding retribution is inevitable. To express these retributions, we think Jesus made use of temporal punishments symbolically.

The kingdom of God, or the gospel of Christ, was set up in our world to enlighten it; it is therefore the light of the world; and the more this light advances, the more it will reprove of sin, overcome it, and save men from

Damnation of Gehenna explained.

it. Men, destitute of the knowledge of the gospel, can justify themselves, while rendering evil for evil; but the law of Christ condemns the practice. But when Jesus spoke of the damnation of Gehenna, in Matt. xxiii. 32, he was addressing the Scribes and Pharisees in their temple, accusing them of their hypocrisy and wickedness, and said: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of Gehenna?" And he proceeds immediately to show them what he meant by this damnation, and when it would come upon them; for he adds: "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them shall ye kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation." That Jesus here spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, is fully and clearly seen, by duly noticing the fact, that when he had finished his address to the Scribes and Pharisees, in the temple, he went out, and his disciples followed him privately to the Mount of Olives, where they asked him when those things should take place; to which he re-

plied, in a particular description of the time of trouble when Jerusalem should be destroyed, and informed them that that generation should not pass away, until the whole should be accomplished. By the whole connexion, it evidently appears, that when Jesus denounced on his wicked enemies, who he knew would put him to death, and persecute his disciples, the damnation of Gehenna, he gave them to understand, that the woful judgments, of which their prophets had warned them, would soon be executed.

Cruden says that some suppose Tophet and Gehenna the same. that "the name of *Tophet* is given to the valley of Hinnom, because of the sacrifices that were offered there to the god Molech, by beat of drum, which in Hebrew is called Toph." We meet with this word applied to this valley, which is Gehenna, as written in Greek, 2 Kings xxiii. 10: "And he defiled Tophet, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech." Also, Isaiah xxx. 33: "Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." Such is the prophet's figurative language, when speaking of the destruction of the Assyrian army. Again; Jeremiah vii. 31, 32:

“ And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into mine heart. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor, The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet till there be no place.” See also the whole of ch. xix., in which we find a most awful description of the destruction of Jerusalem, and in which the Lord says, verse 12: “ Thus will I do unto this place, saith the Lord, and to the inhabitants thereof, and even make this city as Tophet.” Here we have a most clear description of the damnation of Tophet, or of the valley of the son of Hinnom, or of Gehenna, for these several words mean the same thing. Now it appears to us, after giving the subject as much attention, as the most patient investigation could bestow, that the supposition, that Jesus meant that the Scribes and Pharisees should understand him to be speaking of a damnation, when he spoke of the damnation of Gehenna, of which none of their prophets ever spoke, does no small violence to the sacred writings, and is but a small recommendation of the discernment of those who would support it. To us, it is a warning specimen of the iron bondage, in which tradition has bound the human mind,

and strangely hampered the brightest intellects. It seems that these erring brethren have given up the high places demolished by king Josiah, and built new ones in a Tophet, which they have located in a future state, where their Molech is to receive their sons and their daughters, in his bosom of fire? The making of shrines to this idol has long been a source of much gain, and the craftsmen in the employ are as careful of his magnificence and repute, as Demetrius was of the fame of Diana of the Ephesians. But they seem to be blind to the immense sufferings, which they inflict on thousands of innocent beings, by driving them into gloom and madness, with the terrors of their doctrine.

If in the passages, which have been noticed, where the Saviour used the word Gehenna, no allusion to a future state of punishment can be discovered, even those who believe that such doctrine is taught in the Scriptures, will feel no confidence in using any other passage, where the same word occurs, in support of such punishment. We shall, therefore, submit our remarks on the word Gehenna, as a sample of our views of the use of this word, in all the passages, in which it is found in the New Testament.

As Jesus, in the instructions which he gave to his disciples, was quite particular in giving them to under-

Punishment of the
Jews was in that
generation.

stand, that his coming to render unto his friends and his enemies according to their works, would take place in the generation in which he lived, and while some of them should remain alive on the earth, it is worthy of special notice that he gave them no information that he should ever come for such a purpose in any later age or period of time. Corresponding with this important fact, we find, in the writings of his apostles, that whenever they spoke of the coming of their Divine Master, they spoke of it as an event immediately to take place. Peter and John were doubtless present when Jesus spoke to his disciples on this subject; and it is evident enough from certain expressions we find in their writings, that they remembered his sayings. Among the important signs, which he charged his disciples duly to regard, Jesus more than once mentioned the coming of *false Christs*, who should deceive many. See Matt. xxiv. 5: "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." Verse 24: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Compare this with 1 John ii. 18: "Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come; even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." It is

not probable that this epistle was written more than one or two years before the destruction of Jerusalem, by the Romans. The time had then come for the special signs, of which Jesus spoke, to appear. They did then appear; and this disciple thereby knew the *last time*, by which is meant the end of the world, of which Jesus spoke in Matt. xxiv., was at hand. In his warnings to his disciples, Jesus charged them to be watchful. See verses 42—44: "Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore, be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." Compare this with 2 Peter iii. 10: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." As Peter wrote this epistle eight or nine years before John wrote, as before quoted, he does not affirm that the time, called the last time, had actually come. The signs, of which the Divine Master spoke to his disciples, were not so visible when Peter wrote as they were when John spoke of many antichrists. On this particular, see the Apostle Paul, 1 Thess. v. 1—6: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For your-

The apostles agreed
with their Master
on this matter.

selves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety ; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child ; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of the light, and the children of the day ; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others ; but let us watch and be sober." This epistle was written some few years before that of St. Peter, from which we have quoted. Though St. Paul was not present with the disciples, when the Divine Master gave them the warnings of which we have spoken, he, as well as all the Christian converts, had had ample opportunities to learn these things from those who had heard them from the lips of Jesus. The least attention to the words of the Apostle Paul above quoted, will discover that the writer expected that the day of the Lord, of which he spoke, would come as a thief, in the life-time of those to whom his epistle was directed.

Book of
Revelation.

In accordance with the fact that the judgments of which Christ and his apostles spoke, were all accomplished near the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, we find the testimony recorded in the book of Revelation. See ch. i. 1 : "The revelation of Jesus Christ,

which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass." Verse 3: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand." Ch. iii. 2: "Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Ch. xxii. 7: "Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." Verse 10: "And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand." Verse 12: "And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."—(Com. Matt. xvi. 27, 28.) Verse 20: "He which testifieth these things saith, surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

It may serve to confirm, what we are here endeavoring to establish, to compare the direction given (Rev. xxii. 10,) with certain directions which were given to the prophet Daniel. In Dan. viii. 26, it was said to the prophet: "And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true; wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days." Also—xii. 4: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end." Verse 9: "And

*Books of Daniel
and Revelation
compared.*

he said, Go thy way, Daniel ; for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." In the last verse of the chapter the prophet was told that he should rest, and stand in his lot at the end of the days. The reader will learn by these passages, that the reason why Daniel's prophecy was sealed up, was because it related to events that would not take place for "many days." With this fact let it be noticed that when Jesus spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem, as recorded Matt. xxiv., he referred to this prophecy of Daniel ; and gave his disciples to understand that they might live to see it fulfilled. Here then let it be noticed, that Daniel prophesied but about six hundred years before the destruction of Jerusalem. Let these circumstances and facts be compared with the direction given in Rev. xxii. 10 : " And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book ; for the time is at hand." By bringing these Scriptures together, we see that Daniel was in his lot when his prophecy was fulfilled ; and that this was when Jerusalem was destroyed. We also learn the impropriety of supposing, that the coming of Christ, to render to every man according to his works, of which we read in the last chapter of the Revelation, is yet future. If Daniel's prophecy was sealed up, because the events were six hundred years distant ; and if the prophecy in Revelation was not

allowed to be sealed, because the time of its fulfilment was at hand, is it reasonable to suppose it is yet future, after nearly eighteen hundred years have passed away ?

Having thus shown that no judgements were denounced on the wicked, The foregoing arguments enforced. either by Jesus or his apostles, that were not confined to the generation in which they lived, we are naturally led to inquire, why these divinely inspired teachers omitted the denunciation of retribution in the future state, if such be indispensable for the support of the religion which they taught, and the virtues which they recommended ? Did neither Jesus nor his apostles understand the laws of the human mind so as to know that unless rewards and punishments in the future world were constantly enforced on the minds of men, they would never be truly pious or morally virtuous ? How came it to pass that our revival preachers should now understand these important things better than those to whom we look as to teachers sent of God ?

The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, recorded in Luke 16th, last Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. paragraph, is thought, by divines in general, to be ample, and even positive proof of a future state of torment. Most Christian people have been in the habit of so understanding this portion of our Saviour's instructions ; and when

we consider the force of education, and the proneness of the human mind to follow the beaten path of tradition, we are not at all surprised that thousands of people, for centuries, have given their full assent to such a use of this Scripture. But we must acknowledge, that it is not a little to be wondered at, that so many learned critics, as have written commentaries on the scriptures, should have overlooked the true application of this parable. As we have, many years since, published our reasons for dissenting from the commonly received opinion concerning this Scripture, and also given our views of its true meaning; and as these views are now generally known among those who have rescinded the doctrine of a future state of punishment, we propose to do little more, in this place, than to present the reader with what we may call the *key* which unlocks the mystery of the parable.

Reasons for regarding it to be a parable.

But the reader may possibly ask, by what authority we call this Scripture a parable. By answering this query, it seems probable we may assist the reader the more easily to comprehend the whole subject. Let us ask what good reason we have to believe the following Scripture to be a parable? Judges ix. 8—15: "The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive-tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive-tree

said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? And the trees said unto the fig-tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig-tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon." In answer to our question respecting this passage, the reader replies: We have two ample reasons for saying that this passage is a parable. 1st. Trees are not only destitute of the power of speech, but are even inanimate; and therefore never wanted a king to rule over them, nor ever spoke to the olive-tree, to the fig-tree, to the vine, or the bramble on such a subject. And 2d. The connexion in which this passage is found, shows clearly, that Jotham, who delivered it, used the trees to represent the Shechemites, who anointed Abimelech king over them; and the bramble to represent Abimelech. All will al-

low that these are good reasons for believing that the Scripture above quoted is a parable.

Now we conceive that we have two reasons for calling this Scripture, concerning the Rich Man and Lazarus, a parable, which are not only similar to those above offered, for calling the words of Jotham, a parable, but equally applicable. In the first place, it is just as well known, that a dead man can neither see nor speak, as it is that trees never talk. But it may be said, that it was in *hell* that the rich man lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off. True, but this *hell* is the same as that of which Jacob spake, when he said, (Gen. xxxvii. 33,) "I will go down into the *grave* (hades) unto my son, mourning." Does anybody believe that Jacob thought that his son had gone to such a hell as Christian people believe the wicked will be tormented in hereafter, and that he himself was going there too? Job says, "Oh that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, (hades,) that thou wouldst keep me secret, until thy wrath be passed, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me!"—(Ch. xiv. 13.) The reader is requested to keep in mind that it is said that the rich man lifted up his eyes in hades, being in torment. But this hades is the place in which Job desired that God would hide him, until his wrath was passed. Could one of our preachers, who are in the habit of working

on the fears of the people by the use of the word *hell*, in any way more surprise a congregation than by uttering, publicly, Job's prayer, above cited? What would the people now think, should they hear such a preacher say, in prayer to God, "Oh that thou wouldst hide me in hell, that thou wouldst keep me secret until thy wrath be past?" It is in hell that God's wrath is endured to the greatest possible degree, according to the doctrine of the preachers of whom we speak; but it is clear enough that Job thought if he could be hid in *hades* he would be secure from the wrath to which he was exposed while in this mortal life. Did Job expect that he should go to *hades*? Yes: for he says, (See ch. xvii. 13, 14,) "If I wait, the grave (*hades*) is mine house: I have made my bed in darkness. I have said to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister." How does Job describe his expected, and wished for condition in *hades*? —(See ch. iii. 17—19.) "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of their oppressor. The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master."

The reader will deem the fact important, in our inquiry, that the word *hades* is nowhere used in the Old Testament, to

Sense of hades.

signify a place of suffering. In the Hebrew, the word rendered *grave* in the above quotations is *Sheol*, which in many other places is rendered hell. In the Greek, the word is *hades*, both in the passage in Genesis, above quoted, and in this parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus ; and there is no reason why the word should not have been rendered *grave* in the last as well as the other. But if our translators had rendered the word *hades*, *grave*, in this parable, no one would ever have believed that it was anything but a parable. Wakefield says, treating on this parable, "It must be remembered, that *hades* nowhere means *hell* in any author whatsoever, *sacred* or *profane* ; and also, that our Lord is giving his hearers a parable." Dr. Campbell, speaking of *hades*, says, "In my judgment it ought *never* in Scripture to be rendered *hell*, at least in the sense wherein that word is now universally understood by Christians."

Dr. Clarke says, "The word *hell*, used in the common translation, conveys *now* an improper meaning of the original word ; because *hell* is only used to signify the place of the damned. But as the word *hell* comes from the Anglo-Saxon *helan*, to *cover*, or *hide*, hence the tiling or slating of a house is called, in some parts of England, (particularly Cornwall,) *heling*, to this day ; and the *covers of books*, (in Lancashire,) by the same name,

so the literal import of the original word *hades* was formerly well expressed by it."

If we allow the account of the rich man after he died to be a literal account, and do not allow that it is a Consequences of supposing it a literal account. parable, we make out that after the rich man literally died, he could see and speak, and know persons. But this would directly contradict the declaration of the wise man; (See Eccl. ix. 5:) "For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything." Divine revelation makes us acquainted with no sentient existence of man, after he dies, until he is raised from the dead; in which resurrection Jesus told the Sadducees, that men are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection; that they are equal unto the angels, and can die no more. It is quite clear that St. Paul believed in no sentient state between death and the resurrection; for he reasons as follows: (1 Cor. xv. 16—18:) "For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." What sense would there be in this declaration of the apostle, if men can exist, and know, and see, and speak, and suffer, and enjoy, after they are dead, without being made alive in the resurrection? Look, for a moment, at Lazarus, in Abraham's bosom. What

condition is Abraham in? The common opinion is, that he is in a happy state. What benefit then would a resurrection be to him? What condition is Lazarus in? This same common opinion supposes that he is in a blessed state. How then could St. Paul say, that unless Abraham and Lazarus should be raised from the dead, they had perished? If we maintain this state between death and the resurrection, in which men are active beings, exercise the functions of consciousness, are capable of enjoying and of suffering, we contradict the statement made by St. Paul just recited. Now the scene, of what we call the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, is not laid in the resurrection state, but in *hades*, or the grave; and Abraham with Lazarus in his bosom, and the rich man, are all here where they hold conversation.

Similar use of the
word *Sheol* by
Isaiah.

Will it be asked, if in all the Scriptures there is to be found a passage, where the word *hell* is used, and where it represents those who are there as speaking, and where nothing is meant by *hell* but the *grave*, or the state of the dead? (See Isa. xiv. 9—11:) "*Hell* (*hades*) from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they

shall speak, and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, (hell or hades,) and the noise of thy viols; the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee." Here the prophet makes the inhabitants of hell, with all the ancient kings, and chief ones of the earth, come forth to meet the king of Babylon at his approach; and he makes these kings and nobles speak to the king of Babylon, and ask him questions, and state to him certain facts, &c. Let us ask why the Christian clergy have not supposed that this passage gives a relation concerning the inhabitants of the hell with which they have so long frightened their hearers? The answer is very ready; there is nothing said about torment in this hell, in Isaiah. The prophet presents us with a vast company all in motion, eager to meet the king of Babylon at his approach, but there is no intimation that any of this vast multitude were in torment. If the prophet had represented them in a suffering state, the clergy would have believed that their doctrine of a future state of misery was as amply supported by this Scripture, as by the account of the rich man in *hades*. But when they find all the inhabitants of hell in as lively a motion as are the inhabitants of a populous city; when coming forth to meet and welcome some great personage, they see nothing but a parable.

Having, as we think, given as good a reason for believing the passage, concerning the rich man and Lazarus, a parable, as is the first rendered for believing what Jotham said of the trees, a parable, we shall now endeavor to show that our second reason is as good, as the second, which was assigned for that purpose. As that was found in the connexion and general subject, so we shall find in the connexion and general subject, on which Jesus was treating, when he delivered the passage concerning the rich man and Lazarus, evidence equally apparent.

The argument from
the connexion. The subject commences with the 15th chapter, and continues to the end of the 16th. A circumstance occurred which gave no small offence to the Pharisees and Scribes, who were constantly on the watch to see the conduct of Jesus, in order to notice whatever they could find in the same, which they could censure. They saw all the publicans and sinners drawing near unto him to hear his preaching. At this they murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them. Jesus replied, using three very appropriate and instructive parables. The first of the lost sheep; the second of the lost piece of silver; and the third of the prodigal son, and his elder brother. These parables contained a complete answer to the objection which the Pharisees and Scribes had

stated against him. By the elder brother he evidently represented his murmuring opposers, who, according to the parable, were by their own envious and wicked spirit, excluded from the blessed enjoyments, to which penitent sinners were welcomed by the favor of the Gospel. Having thus answered his opposers, he turned to his disciples, and delivered the parable of the unjust steward, in hearing of the Pharisees. In this parable the Divine Teacher informed his disciples that the religious Jews, as a people, were going to be turned out of the stewardship, which, under the legal dispensation, they had occupied, as they had not with faithfulness discharged its duties. He also gave his disciples to understand that though the Jews were going out of the trust, in which they had held a station, they were making no provision for their future wants, in which they discovered less wisdom than an unjust steward, who made friends of his lord's creditors. The Pharisees hearing this parable, were highly provoked, and so exasperated that they derided Jesus. He replied, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." He then adds, not in the least departing from his subject, "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached,

and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." Here he introduces a parable again, for the purpose of representing the impropriety of setting aside the law, and of introducing the gospel dispensation, until the law was fulfilled, and also of the impropriety of holding connexion with the law dispensation after it was legally discharged. This parable reads as follows: "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery." The next words commence the parable of the rich man and Lazarus; and there seems no reason to doubt that it was designed to represent the error the Jews would fall into, by adhering to the ritual dispensation, after it was fulfilled in Christ; the miserable condition which has been the lot of that people ever since the reception of the Gentiles into the gospel covenant, and faith of Abraham, signified by Abraham's bosom. Whoever is acquainted with the many passages, in the Old and New Testaments, relating to these very prominent subjects, will be able to associate a multitude, which evidently point to them. And, as before suggested, since we have long ago published our views of this parable, we deem it unnecessary to be further particular in this place.

We may be permitted, however, to add, that it appears to be equally unreasonable, to take this account of the rich man and Lazarus away from the general subject of the Saviour's discourse, in which we find it, and to apply it to signify the enjoyments and sufferings, and conversations of dead men, in hades or the grave, as it would be to take Jotham's parable away from the history of the Shechemites and Abimelech, and use it to prove that there was once a time, when the trees wanted a king over them, and that they actually made verbal requests to the olive-tree, to the fig-tree, and to the vine for that purpose, and were by them refused, in speeches, which are recorded; and that they obtained the consent of the bramble, in a speech which it returned to their request.

As the following passage is as Luke xii. 4, 5, considered. much relied on for the support of a future state of retribution, as the passage we have just considered, we will not omit to notice it in this place: "And I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him."—(Luke xii. 4, 5.)

There are several reasons which seem not only

to justify an attempt to explain this passage of Scripture, but also to call seriously for the same. The use which has long been made of this passage, by divines, to substantiate the doctrine of misery in the future state, and the fearful horrors with which they have tormented their unhappy adherents, seem to call for an effort to disarm such an unholy cause of a weapon to which it has no right, but which it has long used with truly lamentable effect. To this we may add some pressing requests, for an exposition of the passage, to be presented to the public. It is true that there have already been published sufficient comments on this Scripture to satisfy the candid that it contains no authority in support of the terrible sentiment, in vindication of which it has been generally used. But still the unwarrantable practice is continued, and calls for a full and clear explanation are also continued.

Common interpretation described.

In the first place, it may be beneficial to consider the sentiment in support of which this passage has been used, and the application of the passage to it. 1st. It is believed that the word *hell* in the text, means a place of unspeakable torment in the invisible world. 2dly. That being cast into hell, means, being cast into this state of torment. 3dly. That as men are not able to injure us after they have taken our lives, we need not fear them. 4thly.

But as God is able, after he has killed us, to cast us into this place of torment, we should fear him.

It may not be necessary to be farther particular in stating the common doctrine, to which our text is applied, because it is generally well understood. But we think it somewhat important that such objections to the foregoing use of the text, as have arisen in our meditations on the subject, should be considered.

1st. We object to this use of the text, because we have no information, Objections thereto. in any other part or parts of holy writ, that our Creator has established such a place of torment in the invisible world; and we are very confident that such information is not given in our text.

2dly. We object to this use, because it evidently dishonors that Being whom we ought both to love and venerate. If a being who contrives a state of unmerciful sufferings for his own creatures, deserves our love and our homage, we surely cannot imagine one so evil as not to have equal claims to the same.

3dly. It is very evident that the Divine Master was endeavoring, in the discourse in which our text is found, not only to put his disciples on their guard against two powers, which were able to injure them, the one more, however, than the other; but also to direct them where their safety lay, and where, or in whom to place their confi-

dence: See Matt. x., where the parallel passage is found; verses 16—18: “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye, therefore, wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, and for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.” Verses 22, 23: “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake. But when they shall persecute you in this city, flee ye into another; for verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.” Verses 28—31: “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing; and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.” Here take particular notice: 1st. Jesus calls the enemies of the gospel wolves, and his disciples he calls sheep, which he was sending forth among these wolves; or, in other words, he represents his enemies and his disciples by such figures. 2dly. Observe that Jesus informed his disciples what these wolves would do

to them ; and also let it be remembered that he told them to *beware* of men on account of what they would do to them. 3dly. Let it be duly noticed that immediately after the disciples are told whom not to fear, and whom they should fear, Jesus says, " Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing ; and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." Here it is quite evident that the Divine Master meant to teach his disciples, that as their heavenly Father condescended to take care of even one sparrow, he would certainly take care of them who were of so much more value than many sparrows, that he had even numbered the hairs of their head. But the use of the text under consideration, to which we object, supposes that Jesus represented to his disciples, that their heavenly Father, in whom he would have them put such entire confidence as to fear nothing, was more to be feared than all the wolves among whom he sent his defenceless sheep ! We cannot believe that the Divine Master was so palpably inconsistent in his instructions, as to hold up as an object of the greatest fear, that Father in heaven, in whom he directed his disciples so to trust as not to fear.

4thly. We object to the common use of our

text, because the passage is found in the Saviour's particular directions, given to his disciples. And there are many things said in these directions which are by no means applicable to men in general. But the common use of the text applies it to all men, in all conditions, and in all ages. And, moreover, Jesus told these disciples, in the chapter where our text is recorded, calling them a little flock, not to fear, for it was their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom: see verse 32. To this little flock, we cannot believe that their Divine Shepherd meant to hold up their heavenly Father, as more to be feared than all their enemies.

5thly. We object to this common use of our text, because there is no mention made of our Creator, nor any word used in the text or its connexion, that presents him as that power that was to be feared, because he could cast into hell. To us it seems unaccountable that learned divines, who, no doubt, have been honest in their studies of the Scriptures, have never been startled at the objections which we have here stated; and yet there are many more which might be presented. But we desire not to be too tedious.

Explanation In the second place, we shall attempt an
proposed. explanation of the passage under consideration, according to the present convictions of our understanding. But we would candidly state,

before we proceed, that what we are about to offer, is not, in all its parts, so perfectly clear to our own minds, as we would wish; and therefore a hope is entertained, that some one of more discernment, and of more successful research, will favor us by reflecting more light on this subject.

We shall begin by suggesting that Jesus, in this discourse, spoke to his disciples concerning the enemies of whom we would have them beware; and distinguish between those who only had power, that is, legal authority to scourge them in their synagogues, and in various ways to treat them cruelly, and others, whose power, or legal authority extended, not only to the taking of their lives, but to denying them the rites of burial; and who would destroy their lives and their bodies in *γέεννα* which is the name of the place which the translators call hell. To this suggestion, two objections will arise in the mind of the reader: First, It will be said that Jesus did not point out two objects of fear, but only one; for he said, Fear not them that kill the body, &c., but fear him which, after he hath killed, &c. To answer this objection, we must be able to show, that in Scripture language, it often occurs, that when a preference is to be given to one of two things, the less receives an entire negative, in order to heighten the other. For our satisfaction on this

subject, we refer to Psalm li. 16, 17: "For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Surely none, acquainted with the Scriptures will suppose that David did not believe that God required sacrifices under the law dispensation. But all good men, in all ages, have understood that in God's sight a humble and a contrite heart was a more acceptable sacrifice than were such as were offered on the altar. To strengthen this view, see 1 Sam. xv. 22: "And Samuel said, hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken than the fat of rams." What we are in search of, is fully comprised in the following: Hosea vi. 6: "For I desired mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." Here an entire negative is followed by comparison. If it were proper to say that God required the knowledge of himself *more* than burnt offerings, it allows that he required burnt offerings, which is what the prophet asserts, in the first member of the verse, that God did not desire. Jeremiah, in chap. vii. 22, 23, presents us with a testimony direct and full to our subject: "For I spake not unto your fathers, nor com-

manded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you." With this, compare the institutions and ordinances of the Levitical priesthood, as recorded in Exodus and Leviticus; and it is seen at once, that the meaning of Jeremiah is, that God did not command the sacrifices of that ancient priesthood but in a sense subordinate to the moral precepts of the law. Jesus himself, though he preferred a good moral act to any gift that might be offered on the altar, required the latter also: Matt. v. 23, 24: "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." But if no other proof of what we are endeavoring to establish were at hand, the words of Jesus which follow would be sufficient: John xii. 44: "Jesus cried, and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me." In *words*, here is a contradiction; but not in *sense*. What Jesus meant is clear: He that believes on him, believes that the Father is greater than he; and therefore gives the preference to him who sent him.

Having given what we think is a fair and candid reply to this first objection, we shall now attend to the second, which rests on the word *kill*. It will, undoubtedly, by some be objected, that as Jesus said, Fear not them that kill the body, &c., he assigned to those whom he told his disciples not to fear, the power to take their lives. To meet this objection we confess we have not so ample means as we could wish, nor so much as we might probably obtain by a little more exertion than we have time to employ at present. But what little we have being measurably satisfactory to us, we give it to the reader, hoping that further light on the subject will from some quarter arise. In the first place, we think that the religious enemies of the disciples, who were of the Jews, being Roman subjects, had not the prerogative to take their lives; but that they had the privilege of their ecclesiastical discipline, which enabled them to cast out of the synagogue, to scourge with whips, and to inflict various and cruel tortures; but not to take life. We think this fact is well substantiated by the plea which the Jews made before Pilate, as recorded, John xviii. 31: "Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews, therefore, said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."

In the second place, we are well persuaded

that the word *ἀποκτείνω*, which in the text is rendered kill, is not unfrequently used to express cruel torturing, where life is not taken. Parkhurst says that *ἀποκτείνω* generally implies cruelty and barbarity. Donnegan, thus : to torture, torment, to render miserable or wretched. These we esteem good authority for supposing that although this word is often used to imply the taking of life, it may be understood in a more limited sense in this passage.

In the third place, we think it is very evident that Jesus had the fact in his mind, when he spoke to his disciples on this subject, that their Jewish enemies had not the power to take their lives. This appears by what he says, as recorded in Matt. x., to which we have already referred. See verses 17, 18 : "Beware of men ; for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues ; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles." If their Jewish enemies, who could bring the disciples before their councils, and could scourge them in their synagogues, had authority to take their lives, they would have had no occasion to bring them before Roman governors and kings, but would have been glad to accomplish the whole work themselves.

Fourthly ; after the Divine Instructor had pre-

sented his disciples with these two authorities which would be employed against them, it was natural for him to warn them to be more on their guard against falling into the hands of the Roman authorities, than into the hands of those whose power was less extensive. And, therefore, he warned them to fear the greater power more than the less. But it is evident, from the whole connexion, that he would guard them against both, by their being wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

In the passage, as recorded by Matthew, this comparison for which we contend, is plainly expressed by the word *rather*, (*μᾶλλον*.) "But rather fear him," &c. See chap. vi. 30: "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more (*μᾶλλον*) clothe you, O ye of little faith?" vii. 11: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more (*μᾶλλον*) shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him."

And, fifthly, it appears evident, that, according to the text in Matthew, which answers to the one in Luke, which we are considering, life could not be taken by the lesser power: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul," &c. The word here rendered soul is

ψυχή, which means the natural life of man. See John xiii. 37, 38: "Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life (ψυχή) for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life (ψυχή) for my sake?" It is quite unnecessary to multiply quotations on this subject. The fact is well known to all who have examined this word, that it means the natural life; and there was no more propriety in rendering this word *soul* in Matt. x. 28, than there was for so rendering it John xiii. 37, 38; and then the passage would have made Peter to say, "I will lay down my soul for thy sake," and Jesus to ask him, "Wilt thou lay down thy soul for my sake?" As there is some reason to believe that there was something like a wrong influence operating in the minds of the translators of our Scriptures, we must beg indulgence while we quote several passages more. And this we do, that the common error concerning this subject, and which has been occasioned by the translation, may be corrected. Matt. xvi. 25, 26: "For whosoever shall save his life (ψυχή) shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life (ψυχή) for my sake, shall find it. For, what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (ψυχή) or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (ψυχή.) If by the word *soul*, the translators meant what divines now

mean by it, that is, an immortal part of man, what could induce them to use this word in verse 26, in place of the word life, which they used in the verse preceding? This unwarranted variation of rendering the same word in these two verses, has had a most pernicious effect. And professed divines, either through ignorance or hypocrisy, have imposed the notion on common people, that Jesus, in the above passage, spoke of the eternal damnation of man's immortal soul! That the reader may see the gross absurdity of allowing the word rendered *life* and *soul*, to mean an immortal soul in man, we will put down the first verse of the last quoted passage agreeably to such a supposition. Then verse 25 would read thus: "For whosoever will save his immortal soul shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his immortal soul for my sake, shall find it!" See also Matt. xx. 28: "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life ($\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$) a ransom for many." No one supposes that Jesus here meant to say, that he came to give his immortal soul a ransom for many. Luke xiv. 26: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life ($\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$) also, he cannot be my disciple." We hardly believe that any will contend that Jesus meant that a man must hate

his immortal soul, to fit him to be his disciple. Acts xx. 24: "But none of these things move me; neither count I my life ($\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$) dear unto me," &c. Surely, Paul did not mean to say that he did not count his immortal soul dear unto him.

Notwithstanding we expressed a want of entire satisfaction respecting General conclusion. the last objection to which we have replied, we now say that this want has been nearly, if not entirely removed, by comparing the different passages which relate to the subject. And we feel a good degree of confidence that the mind of the candid reader will feel the force of what has been offered, and see the propriety of paraphrasing our text as follows: "And I say unto you, my friends, be not so much afraid of them who have power only to scourge you in their synagogues, and to administer cruel tortures to your bodies, but have no authority to take your lives, as of that more extensive authority to which your brethren the Jews will deliver you, by bringing you before governors and kings; for this power can, after inflicting cruelties on your bodies, doom your lives and bodies to be destroyed in $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta\alpha$."

It now remains only to give the Gehenna explained. true meaning of the word $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\eta\alpha$, which in our text is rendered hell, though this has already been done in the preceding pages.

Parkhurst, in his Greek and English Lexicon, informs us that *γέεννα* is the corruption of two Hebrew words, one signifying a valley, and the other signifying Hinnom, the name of a person once the possessor of it. He says, "This valley of Hinnom lay near Jerusalem, and had been the place of those abominable sacrifices, in which the idolatrous Jews burned their children alive to Molech, Baal, or the Sun. A particular place in this valley was called Tophet, and the valley itself, the valley of Tophet, from the fire stove in which they burned their children to Molech." He further says, "A gehenna of fire, (Matt. v. 22,) does, as I apprehend, in its outward and primary sense, relate to that dreadful doom of being burnt alive in the valley of Hinnom." The passage in Matt. v. 22, just referred to, reads as follows: "But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." That the learned Parkhurst, who was a believer in future, endless misery, was in the right on this subject, there can be no doubt. But more authority might be quoted, if it were necessary, to show that the word rendered hell, in our text, means nothing but that place of execution, where malefactors were cast alive, and consumed in fire.

APPENDIX.

BY THOMAS WHITTEMORE.

A.

THE views of Mr. Ballou, on Matt. x. 28, and Luke xii. 4, 5, are given in the body of the work. They are worthy of deep consideration. The following remarks are offered as belonging to the controversy concerning the abovenamed texts.

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Matt. x. 28; Luke xii. 4, 5.

This passage is, confessedly, difficult of construction. Universalists are sincerely desirous, we believe, to learn what is its true sense. There are many persons who seem confident that the passage teaches the doctrine of endless misery in hell (*Gehenna*.) But let us look at the passage carefully.

Does it say, God *will* destroy both soul and

body in hell? No; it says he *is able* to do so. It describes his *ability*, not his *will*, nor his *purpose*. We do not doubt God's ability to destroy the whole universe; but is it his will to do so? Should it be said, in reply to this, that Jesus would not have spoken as he did, if he had not believed there was danger that God would destroy soul and body in hell, we say this is an unjustifiable conclusion. It is often the case, that men speak of the power of God, by describing him as *being able* to do what they have no expectation he will do. As an illustration of this, take the following quotation from one of the hymns sung in Christian assemblies:—

“Praise to thee, thou great Creator,
Bounteous Source of every joy;
He whose hand sustains all nature,
He whose nod can all destroy.”

Here we are told, that God can destroy all nature. But was it the poet's intention to assert, that God actually *would destroy* all nature? No; he merely referred to the extent of God's power. So in the passage before us. When it is said, God *is able* to destroy both soul and body in hell, there is not the slightest affirmation that he *will* to do so. Take another instance. When John the Baptist said, “God *is able* of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham,” did he intend to say, that God *would do so*? Certainly not; he

merely meant to state what God had the power to do.

But again. If this passage refer to the future existence, and if the terms *soul* and *body* are to be understood as referring to the *immortal spirit* and the *mortal body* of man, and if the *destruction* is to be understood in the literal sense of the phrase then how can the doctrine of endless misery be true? If we adopt such a construction of the passage, that doctrine falls to the ground at once; for if the immortal spirit and the mortal body are both destroyed, then neither can remain subject to punishment, and, of course, neither can be punished forever. To destroy both soul and body, in the sense in which these terms are generally employed, certainly cannot signify, to perpetuate the punishment of soul and body in hell forever. That would be the very reverse of destruction.

Once more. Have we any evidence, that the term *Gehenna*, rendered *hell* in the passage before us, had ever been used in the time of our Saviour to signify endless punishment, or, in fact, any punishment in the future state? Jesus probably used the word in some sense that was common in his day. We look in vain, in the Old Testament, for proof that *Gehenna* was used to signify a place of punishment in the future state; nor is there any proof that *Gehenna* was used in such a sense, before the time of the Saviour. Jesus would not

employ the word in a sense to which the people were altogether unaccustomed ; and, therefore, it is more than probable that he did not use the word to signify a place of punishment in the future state. At any rate, we must believe that he did not, unless we see evidence to the contrary. We know that quotations are sometimes made from the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel, to show that Gehenna had been employed in the time of Christ to signify endless misery ; but these Targums are now generally referred, by the learned critics, to a much later date. If any person will produce a passage, in which *Gehenna* is applied to punishment in the future state, from any writer who is known to have lived *before the time of Christ*, or even contemporaneously with the Saviour, we will acknowledge that there is an argument in favor of such an application to the term, which as yet we have never seen.

But again ; is it certain that the Saviour intended to refer to the principle, which is called the immortal spirit of man ? “ Fear not them which kill the body ($\sigma\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha$,) but are not able to kill the soul” ($\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$.) Is it certain the Saviour here referred to that immortal part of man, which is to survive the ravages of death ? We want proof, if we are called on to admit this. We know that the Greek term $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ does very frequently signify mere animal life. Thus, Matt.

ii. 10: "They are dead which sought the young child's *life*." Did they seek its *immortal spirit*, or did they seek to destroy its earthly being? Again: "Take no thought for your *life*, what you shall eat," &c. "Is not *the life* more than meat?" Matt. vi. 25. Here the term evidently does not signify anything more than mere animal existence. What circumstance is it, then, which makes it so certain as some imagine it to be, that *ψυχή*, in Matt. x. 28, and Luke xii. 4, 5, signifies the ever-living principle? We think there is room for great doubt on that point.

But, in still further confirmation of what we have said, let it be observed, that the sacred writers make a clear distinction between *ψυχή*, the life,—and *πνεῦμα*, the spirit. The spirit, *πνεῦμα*, is never said to be destroyed in Gehenna. We challenge the world to produce an instance of the kind. Paul says, "I pray God your whole spirit (*πνεῦμα*,) and soul (*ψυχή*,) and body (*σῶμα*,) be preserved blameless, unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thess. v. 23. Here *ψυχή* is plainly distinguished from *πνεῦμα*. See also Heb. iv. 12. "For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of *soul* and *spirit*." Here *ψυχή* and *πνεῦμα* are plainly distinguished again. If *ψυχή* signifies the immortal spirit, what is the *πνεῦμα*? We beg, that it may

be specially remembered, that we read of casting the body into Gehenna, and of destroying the *ψυχή*, life, in Gehenna; but the word *πνεῦμα* is not mentioned once in connexion with Gehenna in the whole Bible. Strange! strange! if the immortal spirit is doomed to be punished in *Gehenna forever!*

If the foregoing remarks have been duly considered, the reader will see, that it is by no means probable, that Jesus spoke the words in Matt. x. 28, for the purpose of teaching the doctrine of endless misery. See Plain Guide to Universalism, pp. 92—95.

B.

ORIGIN OF THE DOCTRINE OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

Object of this essay. WHETHER the doctrine of future punishment be true, it is not our purpose at the present time to inquire. Our object is to seek its origin. Whence came it? Did men find it in the revelation God has made? or did it arise from some other source? If it be found in revelation, it must be either in the Old Testament or the New, or both. Even if we should allow that it is taught in the New Testa-

ment, yet it would not be proper to say that the human race learned it from that source, because it was believed and taught before the Christian revelation was made. If therefore the Christian revelation contain that doctrine, it cannot justly be considered a part of the *revelation*, because it was known before. It is merely sanctioned, by the New Testament, if found there; it surely cannot be said to be therein revealed. We do not, however, by these remarks, intend to allow that it has the sanction of Divine authority in any way.

We will inquire, in the first place, whether the doctrine of future punishment is taught in the Old Testament? Future punishment not taught in the Old Testament.

This is a question which may be very speedily disposed of. There are few persons who will now maintain that the Old Testament reveals the doctrine of future rewards and punishments. Some dark and indistinct notions about a post-mortem, shadowy existence, seem to have been entertained, by the ancient Jews; but in their view all men descended to the same *sheol*; they seem to have had no conception of future retribution.

Dr. Campbell says, "It is plain, that in the Old Testament, the most profound silence is observed in regard to the state of the deceased, their joys or sorrows, happiness or misery. It is represented to us rather by negative qualities than by positive, by

Opinions of Dr. Campbell and others.

its silence, its darkness, its being inaccessible, unless by preternatural means, to the living, and their ignorance about it. Thus much in general seems always to have been presumed concerning it, that it is not a state of activity adapted for exertion, or indeed for the accomplishment of any important purpose, good or bad."—*Prelim. Diss.* vi. *Part 2.* Similar ground is taken in Jahn's *Biblical Arch.*, Sec. 314. Bishop Bull also acknowledged the same thing, *Harm. Apos. Dis.*, post. chap. x.

*Opinion of Bp.
Warburton.*

Bishop Warburton, in his *Divine Legation*, speaks with peculiar strength on this point. In reference to the ancient Hebrews, he says, "But everything they do or say, respects the present life only; the good and ill of which are the sole objects of all their pursuits and aversions. Hear, then, the sum of all: The sacred writings are extremely various, both in their subject, style and composition. They contain an account of the creation and origin of the human race; the history of a private family, of a chosen people, and of exemplary men and women. They consist of hymns and petitions to the Deity, precepts of civil life, and religious prophecies and predictions. Hence I infer, that as, amidst all this variety of writing, the doctrine of a future state of man never once appears to have had any share in this people's thoughts, it never did

indeed make part of their religious opinions. And when, to all this, we find their occasional reasoning only conclusive on the supposition that a future state was not amongst the religious doctrines of the people, the above considerations, if they need any, would receive the strongest support and confirmation.”—*Book v., Sec. 5.* Dr. Paley, in like manner, speaking of the Old Testament says, “This dispensation dealt in temporal rewards and punishments, and that ‘the blessings and curses’ promised by Moses, ‘consisted altogether of worldly benefits and worldly punishments.’”

Rev. H. H. Milman, in his History of the Jews, Family Library Edition, 1829, vol. i., 3d book, pp. 116, 117, remarking on their civil and religious laws, uses the following language: “The sanction on which the Hebrew law was founded, is, if possible, more extraordinary. The lawgiver, educated in Egypt, where the immortality of the soul, under some form, most likely that of the metempsychosis or transmigration of the soul, entered into the popular belief; nevertheless maintained a profound silence on that fundamental article, if not of political, at least of religious legislation—rewards and punishments in another life. He substituted temporal chastisements and temporal blessings. On the violation of the constitution followed inevitably blighted harvests, famine, pestilence,

Rev. H. H. Mil-
man's opinion.

barrenness among their women, defeat, captivity ; on its maintenance, abundance, health, fruitfulness, victory, independence. How wonderfully the event verified the prediction of the inspired legislator—how invariably apostasy led to adversity—repentance and reformation to prosperity—will abundantly appear during the course of the following history.”

Rev. Charles Hudson's opinion.

Rev. Charles Hudson says, in his Letters to Rev. Hosea Ballou, p. 70, “The law of Moses did not even teach a future state of existence ; and it would be downright contradiction to admit that the law was enforced by penalties extending into a future state, when the law did not reveal such a state.”

Future punishment taught in the Apocrypha.

These authorities, coming as they do from believers in the doctrine of future punishment, must be sufficient to show that that doctrine had not its origin in the Old Testament. But we do find this doctrine in the Apocrypha. Punishment after death is distinctly asserted. The Apocrypha, however, is no revelation from God. It is a remarkable fact, that the first declaration of that doctrine in any Jewish writings, occurs in the avowedly Apocryphal books, written by some ingenious but mischievous Jews, who had probably been contaminated by the Egyptian forms of heathenism.

The heathen believed in future punishments.

We cannot fail to give in this place the following very conclusive para-

graph from the work of Rev. T. J. Sawyer, entitled "Endless Punishment, its Origin and Grounds examined," &c.

"But whenever it [the doctrine of endless misery] arose, or wherever, and for what purpose soever it was called into existence, one fact is clear and most significant; and that is, that *it originally appeared in the heathen world*, and took its place with the grand system of falsehood and deception which so long held its sway over the great mass of mankind. This is a fact beyond all doubt or controversy. The doctrine of endless misery is no doctrine of Old Testament revelation. It can boast no divine origin. Bishop Warburton tells us that even the Greek writers called future punishments *foreign*, by which they meant Egyptian, and he says moreover that endless punishments were added to keep perverse and ungovernable dispositions in subjection. In this he is fully supported by ancient writers. Polybius, for instance, an ancient Greek historian, tells us plainly that 'since the multitude is ever fickle and capricious, full of lawless passions and irrational and violent resentments, there is no way left to keep them in order, but by the terrors of future punishment and all the pompous circumstance that attends such kind of fiction. On which account, the ancients acted, in my opinion, with great judgment and penetration, when they

contrived to bring in those notions of the gods and a future state into the popular belief.' Strabo, another Greek writer, speaks to the same purpose. 'It is impossible,' he says, 'to govern women, and the gross body of the people, and to keep pious, holy and virtuous, by the precepts of philosophy. This can only be done by the fear of the gods, which is raised and supported by ancient fictions and modern prodigies.' He tells us further that the 'apparatus of the ancient mythologies,' was 'an engine which the legislators employed as bugbears to strike a terror into the childish imagination of the multitude.'"

Same subject continued.

This brings us to show, that the heathen, from a very early date, believed in punishments in the post-mortem state for the sins of this life. Whether all their philosophers really believed these notions, or merely taught them to keep the common people in awe, we will not undertake to determine. The Stoics, a sect of Grecian philosophers, objected to future punishments, as taught by Plato and others; and they did so on this ground, viz., that men ought to promote virtue for its own sake, and avoid vice for the evil of the turpitude there is in it. To go far back in the history of man, Moses, though educated in all the wisdom of Egypt, did not adopt the Egyptian notions concerning the future state. Enfield shows, in his

History of Philosophy, chapter viii., pp. 82—84, that the Egyptians held the doctrine of future punishment. They offered up prayers for the departed; and thought that different degrees of guilt would have to pass through different degrees of purgation to purify them. We are not able to trace the doctrine of future punishment to any earlier existence than this; and we here discover that that doctrine is clearly of Egyptian origin, so far as history goes.

The Celts, among whom are reck-
 oned the Gauls, Britons, Germans, The Celts, Gauls,
 Britons, Germans,
 Greeks, &c.
 and other northern nations, believed
 in rewards and punishments after death. See
 Enfield, chapter x. The Scythians and Thracians
 probably believed in the same doctrine. Chapter
 xii. The leading Greeks began very early in
 their history "to terrify the ignorant vulgar into
 subjection" by fables. Diodorus Siculus relates
 that Orpheus was the first among the Greeks who
 taught the doctrine of future rewards and punish-
 ments. Enfield, pp. 121, 122. "That this doc-
 trine was commonly received among the follow-
 ers of Orpheus appears from the following anec-
 dote. A priest of Orpheus, who was exceedingly
 poor and wretched, boasting to Philip of Macedon
 that all who were admitted into the Orphic mys-
 teries would be happy after death, Philip said to
 him, 'why then do you not immediately die, and

put an end to your poverty and misery?" One principal end of the religious rites and mysteries which the first founders of the Grecian states introduced, was, unquestionably, the support of civil authority; and the management of the affairs of religion and those of government, were at first in the same hands. Socrates believed in future rewards and punishments, and so also did Plato. But as we have hinted, there were exceptions among the heathen philosophers. They understood that these doctrines were relied on by statesmen "to terrify the ignorant vulgar into subjection."

The Stoics objected
to the general
belief in
future punishment.

Dr. Cudworth, speaking of the Stoics, a Grecian sect of philosophers, says, "They seem to have been all of this persuasion, that the frightening of men with punishments after death was no proper nor accommodate means to promote virtue, because it ought to be pursued after for its own sake, or the good of honesty, as vice to be avoided for that evil of turpitude which is in it, and not for any other external evil consequent thereupon."—*Intellectual System of the Universe, Andover Edition*, vol. i., pp. 555, 556. He then quotes Chrysippus, who is represented by Plutarch, Tom. 2, p. 1040, Ed. Ryland, as reprehending Plato for subjoining to his Republic certain frightful stories of punishments after death. The following is the passage

referred to in Plutarch: "Chrysippus affirmeth, that Plato (in the person of Cephalus) does not rightly deter men from injustice by the fear of divine punishment and vengeance after death; since this opinion (of torments, after death) is liable to much misconception, and the contrary is not without probabilities; so that it seems to be but like to women's frightening of children from doing unhappy tricks with those bugbears of Acco and Alphite."

The results to which we have now General results of the argument. come, are these; 1st. That the doctrine of future rewards and punishments is not taught in the Old Testament. For our present purpose this is settled, by the testimony of some of the eminent believers and defenders of that doctrine. The latest book of the Old Testament was written about 420 B. C. 2d. We have seen that the heathen nations, from the earliest antiquity, in the midst of their other crude errors, have defended the same doctrine, as a general thing, although there were not wanting wise men among them who believed that virtue should be practised and vice abhorred, not in reference to future rewards and punishments, but for what they were in themselves. 3d. Of the Jews, those out of Judea, first felt the effects of heathen philosophy; and among the Jews of Alexandria (in Egypt) the Apocrypha had its origin. In

one, at least, of the Apocryphal books the doctrine of future punishment is stated, which goes to show still more clearly the heathen origin of that doctrine.

The Jews became
contaminated
with heathen phi-
losophy.

How did the Jews get this doctrine? Certainly not from divine revelation. It is nowhere found in the Old Testament. This is conceded by some of the most eminent of the believers in future punishment. The Jews did not learn it therefore from their prophets and holy men. Moses taught only temporal rewards and punishments; but these he asserted in the most positive manner. Of the books of the long line of prophets none taught that doctrine. Where then did the Jews get it? Ans. From the heathen systems of philosophy. Every person acquainted with the history of philosophy, must concede this. Many of them found it in Babylon during the captivity, notwithstanding their devotion to the religion of their fathers. They insensibly imbibed it. Immense numbers of the Jews were sent down into lower Egypt to colonize Alexandria. On these the Egyptian, Grecian, and other systems of philosophy had much power, and through them the same power was exerted on the Jews at home. These various systems were carried to Alexandria by the influx of people drawn in by its rising greatness.

The well known extract from Dr. Campbell, as to the change which took place among the Jews in regard to retribution in the future state, will not be inappropriate in this place.

Dr. Campbell's
testimony to this
point.

But the opinions neither of Hebrews nor of heathens remained invariably the same. And, from the time of the captivity, more especially from the time of the subjection, of the Jews, first to the Macedonian empire, and afterwards to the Roman; as they had a closer intercourse with Pagans, they insensibly imbibed many of their sentiments, particularly on these subjects whereon their law was silent, and wherein, by consequence, they considered themselves as at greater freedom. On this subject of a future state, we find a considerable difference in the popular opinions of the Jews in our Saviour's time, from those which prevailed in the days of the ancient prophets. As both Greeks and Romans had adopted the notion, that the ghosts of the departed were susceptible both of enjoyment and of suffering, they were led to suppose a sort of retribution in that state, for their merit or demerit in the present. The Jews did not indeed adopt the Pagan fables on this subject; nor did they express themselves entirely in the same manner; but the general train of thinking in both came pretty much to coincide."—*Sixth Prelim. Diss.*

Josephus. Josephus, in his twenty books of the Antiquities, compiled entirely, as he informs us, out of the Hebrew Scriptures, nowhere mentions future punishment as being a principle of that people's belief.

Conclusions from foregoing facts. Although the object of this article is not to ascertain the truth or falsity of future retribution, but merely to seek the origin of that doctrine, one cannot refrain from the inquiry, that if a knowledge of that doctrine is necessary to the moral welfare of mankind, how did it happen that the heathen should have been the originators of it? How did it happen that it took its rise in Egypt, where everything foul and unworthy has been deified and worshipped? and that it was believed by the ancient Celts, Britons and Gauls, who were as cruel in their religious rites as any people that ever lived on the face of the earth? and that it was resorted to everywhere by tyrants and ambitious priests, "to terrify the ignorant vulgar into subjection?" There is no doubt that the Old Testament exercised a great influence over the Jews, notwithstanding all their perversities and aberrations. Had it not been for their reverence for the sacred books, they would have been engulfed in heathen superstitions much sooner than they were. In the time of the Lord Jesus, the Pharisees were unquestionably infected with many heathen no-

tions ; but he never adopted the heathen fables, nor referred to them, except by way of comparison and similitude, as when he spake of cities which had been exalted to heaven and which should be brought down to *hades*.

C.

THE following extract is from a sermon by the celebrated Laurence Sterne. The text, "*Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.*" Prov. iii. 17. It will serve to show that there is a retribution in this world, sufficient, if properly understood and realized, to deter men from sin and induce them to live in habits of virtue.

"There are two opinions which the inconsiderate are apt to take upon trust. The first is,—A vitious life is a life of liberty, pleasure, and happy advantages. The second is,—and which is the converse of the first,—That a religious life is a servile and most uncomfortable state.

"The first breach which the devil made upon human innocence, was, by the help of the first of these suggestions, when he told Eve, that by eating of the tree of knowledge, she should be as

God; that is, she should reap some high and strange facility from doing what was forbidden her. But I need not repeat the success: Eve learnt the difference between good and evil by her transgression, which she knew not before; but then she fatally learnt, at the same time, that the difference was only this: that GOOD is that which can only give the mind pleasure and comfort;—and that EVIL is that which must necessarily be attended, sooner or later, with shame and sorrow.

“As the deceiver of mankind thus began his triumph over our race,—so has he carried it on ever since by the very same argument of delusion;—that is, by possessing men’s minds early with great expectations of the present incomes of sin,—making them dream of wondrous gratifications they are to feel in following their appetites in a forbidden way,—making them fancy that their own grapes yield not so delicious a taste as their neighbor’s, and that they shall quench their thirst with more pleasure at his fountain, than at their own. This is the opinion which at first too generally prevails,—till experience and proper seasons of reflection make us, at one time or other, all confess, that our counsellor has been (as from the beginning) an impostor;—and that, instead of fulfilling these hopes of gain and sweetness in what is forbidden,—on the contrary, every unlawful enjoyment leads only to bitterness and loss.

“ The second opinion, or, that a religious life is a servile and uncomfortable state, has proved a no less fatal and capital false principle in the conduct of inexperience through life, the foundation of which mistake arising chiefly from this previous wrong judgment,—that true happiness and freedom lie in a man’s always following his own humor ;—that to live by moderate and prescribed rules, is to live without joy ;—that not to prosecute our passions is to be cowards, and to forego everything for the tedious distance of a future life.

“ Was it true, that a virtuous man could have no pleasure but what should arise from that remote prospect,—I own we are, by nature, so goaded on by the desire of present happiness, that was that the case, thousands would faint under the discouragement of so remote an expectation. But, in the mean time, the Scriptures give us a very different prospect of this matter. There we are told, that the service of God is true liberty,—that the yoke of Christianity is easy, in comparison of that yoke which must be brought upon us by any other system of living ; and the text tells of wisdom,—by which is meant religion ; that it has pleasantness in its way, as well as glory in its end !—that it will bring us peace and joy, such as the world cannot give !—So that, upon examining the truth of this assertion, we shall be set right in

this error, by seeing that a religious man's happiness does not stand at so tedious a distance,—but is so present, and indeed so inseparable from him, as to be felt and tasted every hour; and of this even the vicious can hardly be insensible, from what he may perceive to spring up in his mind from any casual act of virtue: and though it is a pleasure that properly belongs to the good,—yet let any one try the experiment, and he will see what is meant by that moral delight arising from the conscience of well-doing. Let him but refresh the bowels of the needy,—let him comfort the broken-hearted,—or check an appetite,—or overcome a temptation,—or receive an affront with temper and meekness,—and he shall find the tacit praise of what he has done, darting through his mind, accompanied with a sincere pleasure;—conscience playing the monitor even to the loose and most inconsiderate, in their most casual acts of well-doing, and is, like a voice whispering behind, and saying,—This is the way of pleasantness,—this is the path of peace,—walk in it.

* * * * *

“Lastly, to sum up the account of the temporal advantages which probity has on its side,—let us not forget that greatest of all happiness, which the text refers to;—in the expression of all its paths being peace, peace and content of mind, arising from the consciousness of virtue; which is the

true and only foundation of all earthly satisfaction: and where that is wanting, whatever other enjoyments you bestow upon a wicked man, they will as soon add a cubit to his stature as to his happiness. In the midst of the highest entertainment,—this, like the hand-writing upon the wall, will be enough to spoil and disrelish the feast;—but much more so, when the tumult and hurry of delight is over; when all is still and silent; when the sinner has nothing to do but attend its lashes and remorses; and this, in spite of all the common arts of diversion, will be often the case of every wicked man; for we cannot live always upon the stretch;—our faculties will not bear constant pleasure any more than constant pain: there will be some vacancies; and when there are, they will be sure to be filled with uncomfortable thoughts and black reflections: *so that, setting aside the great after-reckoning*, the pleasures of the wicked are overbought even in this world.”

D.

WE introduce to the notice of the reader, in this place, a small volume entitled “A System of Temporal Retribution, vindicated by various Considerations, drawn from Scripture and Observa-

tion. By the Rev. Wm. T. Wishart, A. M., minister of the Presbyterian Church at Shelburne. 'Be sure your sin will find you out.' Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1841."

This learned author proceeds to show, that it is no matter of wonder, that the *infidel* sees not the hand of God, in the system of retribution that prevails on earth; but he wonders that this should be invisible to the eye of the Christian. He says,—

"It is no rare event to meet with those who acknowledge a high veneration for the power and wisdom of the Almighty, who admit that he has power sufficient to ordain, knowledge to foresee what is to come to pass, and who in a general manner are ready to acquiesce in all that the Scriptures allege on these heads—who yet, when their creed is probed and examined, are found to be devoid of any well grounded, rational and consistent belief in a system of terrestrial retribution, which would seem a necessary consequence of their professed opinions, and equally wanting in that course of strictly holy practice which would be the fruit of the doctrine were it sincerely held."—p. 5.

"There is still another class of very frequent occurrence, who lay great stress on the fact that a system of *future* rewards and punishments is plainly developed in the Scriptures, who make

this their main argument for a holy life, but who discern not in the present any traces or symptoms of a plan similar to that which they observe in the hereafter—nay, who are wont to set the exact order of the future reckoning, in vivid contrast with what they conceive the want of order in the present world. And again, there is a class better instructed than the former, who not only admit all which the Scriptures advance as to a final judgment, but who allow in addition, that the marks of a scheme of temporal retribution are discernible in the pages of the sacred volume. These are the most reasonable and erudite that are commonly to be found within the circumference of the church of God—yet even they, according to our view, want something of what is necessary to a complete system. They make a distinction, tacit or avowed, between the *old* and the *new* method of God's providence. They regard the Scriptures as describing a plan of things which obtains not on the earth since the canon was closed. They suppose a break in the scheme—a want of continuity in the procedure of the moral universe of God. By so thinking they virtually make Jehovah to be mutable and inconsistent—they disturb what in another aspect seems harmonious and regular—they remove a great motive to virtue, by discountenancing the notion of a present retribution, and by postponing such a scheme until this world

shall be brought to a close. These, and many other shades of doctrine, are to be seen among the people of God.”—pp. 5, 6.

“What is seldom to be found, is, that scheme of doctrine to which we allude, which, embracing all the other scriptural incitements to holiness, makes a full and enlightened estimate of the motive of temporal retribution—and employs it as an efficient and practical assistant in the life of faith. Believing that there is a flaw in this branch of theology—that the matter is loosely handled in most treatises—that it is too much disparaged by thinkers, and too little recognized by Christians in general, we are desirous to draw the attention of theologians to this neglected point. If our opinion be sound, and if the following pages shall succeed in directing the feelings of the Christian public to this matter, we shall consider that we are doing a service to the theory and practice of religion.”—pp. 6, 7.

Thus far speaks Mr. Wishart in his Introduction. The work is divided into six chapters. They treat on the following subjects:

1st. A system of Temporal Retribution clearly discernible in the Scriptures.

2d. Temporal Retribution exercised through the instrumentality of conscience.

3d. Temporal Retribution inflicted by the opinion of society.

4th. Temporal Retribution exercised by means of human laws.

5th. Temporal Retribution exercised by the self-chastising tendency of sin.

6th. A system of Temporal Retribution rendered probable by the rewards and punishments of a future state.

Such is the plan of Mr. Wishart. We propose to insert here the first chapter.

A SYSTEM OF TEMPORAL RETRIBUTION CLEARLY
DISCERNIBLE IN THE SCRIPTURES.

“The inspired volume may be likened with sufficient propriety to a piece of mechanism with the cover removed, permitting the wheels with their connexions and evolutions to be examined and ascertained. *It is in its leading particulars* the system of the moral universe as it now exists, with this addition that the motives of the agents are laid bare, and the causes of the dispensations that befell them are labelled. Compared with the present scheme, it is, as it were, a glass hive which permits the movements of the beings within to be clearly surveyed. Now it can scarcely be disputed that when we look into it, we see it pervaded from the beginning to the close by a scheme of present retribution.

“The first couple transgress the laws given them as the rule of life, and swift judgment descends

upon them—they are cast out of the paradise which before was their domain. The punishment inflicted upon them was entailed upon all their posterity. And we might take our stand upon this single circumstance, and might show that the very fact of *original sin* inflicted on mankind with all its concomitant sorrows and sufferings, is of itself a standing token, and evidence of terrestrial retribution. But we pass onward. Cain, the eldest born of the first man, sheds the blood of his innocent brother. The anger of the Almighty alights upon him with heavy vengeance—for he is doomed to be throughout the period of the long life of antediluvian men, an outcast from the society of his fellow-beings. The men before the flood, abusing the privilege of long life, provoked the Most High by the awful depravity of their doings. The fountains of the great deep were opened—the heavens poured down torrents of water, and the ungodly race was swept from the face of the earth which they had polluted. Noah, the survivor of this fearful judgment, though an upright man in his general deportment, sins by drunkenness, and one of his three sons who forgot the reverence due to his parent, has a curse denounced against him and his descendants. The pride of men again mounts high, and they combine together to build a tower whose summit should touch the heavens,

and admit them into the mansions of the upper world. Punishment comes down upon them, their plan is hindered, and they who before formed but one people are separated into tongues and nations. Abraham, the father of the faithful, is guilty of a falsehood in his intercourse with Abimelech, and is convicted and reproved by that prince. The wife of Lot disobeys a positive commandment, and, fearful judgment! is turned into a pillar of salt. Hagar is elated by her privileges, and is driven forth an exile from the house of her master. The cities of the plain push iniquity to its highest excess, and he who once swept away a godless generation by a flood of waters, in this instance rained down fire and brimstone from the heavens on the daring offenders. Rebecca, led astray by maternal partiality, imposes on her husband, and obtains the blessing for the younger son. She is punished for the fraud by the dissension which broke out in the household, and by the departure from his home of him whom she favored. Joseph, for his youthful vanity, is driven from his home, and forced to pass through many mischances before the sun of prosperity again shines upon him. His brethren, too, are sharply visited for their jealousy and cruelty, by the fear, the remorse, and the shame to which they were exposed in the sequel. The language of Judah (when Joseph feigned anger against him

and his brethren) tells very pointedly his belief that sin is followed by a sure retribution. 'And Judah said, what shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants.' Pharaoh and his people deal harshly with the Israelites. They are warned, they are entreated, they are visited with plague upon plague, and at length, because of their inveterate disobedience, the monarch and his host were swallowed up in the waters of the Red Sea. The chosen people, in their passage through the wilderness, sinned frequently and provoked their God to anger. They are punished by hunger and thirst, fire belched forth from the bowels of the earth, and consumed some of the offenders—a plague came down upon them, fiery serpents invaded their camp, and stung great numbers of the people, their journey was drawn out into a weary wandering for forty years in a barren desert, and finally there were but two of that whole generation who were suffered to enter into the land of promise. Moses and Aaron, the two leaders of the host, although faithful in the main, yet having sinned, the one by anger, and the other by countenancing the people in their idolatry, are not permitted to set foot on Canaan. Sometimes the Lord interposed in a special and peculiar manner to discover and punish the guilty. Thus Achan, who, contrary

to express command, had reserved to himself part of the booty taken at Jericho, is found out by the casting of lots, and, confessing the crime, is stoned to death along with all his family in the presence of the people. The sons of Eli disgrace the office of the priesthood by their unholy acts, a sentence from on high is pronounced against them, and they are slain as they bore the ark in battle with the Philistines. Balaam contends against Israel in spite of God's command to the contrary, and in return for his frowardness is killed in battle. The whole career of Saul bears testimony to a system of temporal retribution. Throughout his reign he was guilty of continual declensions from the law of that God who had given him the sceptre, and accordingly he was visited with frequent reverses, his unchecked passions distempered his mind, and subjected him to seasons of madness and frenzy, his life is poisoned with jealousy, fear and remorse, the grave yields up its dead to reprove him for his wickedness, and at length, when he had refused reproof and persisted in sin, he dies by his own hand on the field of battle. David, the man after God's own heart, is guilty of the heavy offences of adultery and murder. He is *expressly* punished by the death of the child, the fruit of the criminal connexion, and there was a series of misfortunes from this time to the close of his reign which were sent as fur-

ther chastisements of his dark crimes. Ahitophel assists Absalom in his rebellious schemes against his father, takes umbrage at that prince, and hangs himself. Joab is guilty of deeds of wanton violence and bloodshed. Prosperity attends him throughout the reign of David, but under Solomon his sin finds him out, and he who had "shed the blood of war in peace" is in his turn slain by the sword. Solomon carries too far the indulgence given the Jewish monarchs of a plurality of wives. His wisdom raised him above their evil influence during the vigor of his life, but in his declining years his wives become a snare to him, seduce him to adopt their idolatrous practices, and leave it a matter of considerable doubt whether the wise king really died in the faith of his fathers. Rehoboam with youthful rashness prefers the counsels of his juvenile advisers to the ripe wisdom of the old men, and by so doing occasions division in the nation, so that Israel and Judah are formed into separate kingdoms. Jeroboam encouraged his people in the worship of idols, and in consequence, the favor of the Lord departed from him and his household and kingdom. Ahab and Jezabel favored the false prophets, insulted the prophets of the Lord, practised oppression, fraud and cruelty, and they are notably punished for their dark offences, the one is slain in battle, the other is cast from her window and

devoured by the dogs. The princes and the people in general having through many generations grievously departed from the law of the Lord, they are carried into captivity in Babylon, where during seventy years they endure all the bitter evils of exile, bondage and oppression. Nebuchadnezzar insults the majesty of Heaven by his pride, ambition and ungodliness. He is cast down from his high place, and he who aspired to be equal to Jehovah is debased below the condition of the meanest among men, being doomed during seven years to herd with the beasts of the field, to feed with them on the same fare, and to repair with them to the same caverns. The enemies of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego conspire against them, and cause them to be thrown into a vast fiery furnace. The three righteous men are preserved by a special and wonderful miracle, and they who sought their destruction are themselves consumed in the same furnace. Belshazzar, forgetful of the warnings and the judgments that befell his grandsire, exhibits the same overweening arrogance, conjoined with profligacy and profanity. Vengeance descends upon him in the hour of his loftiest pride and exaltation. As he sat in the midst of his nobles and captains, rioting in drunkenness, sacrilege and licentiousness, a spectral hand is seen by him to write his doom in mystical

characters on the wall, the sentence is expounded to him by the prophet of the Lord, and that very night his city was taken and sacked, he himself was slain, and his kingdom was given to another. Haman cherishes a deadly jealousy against the upright Mordecai, and carries hatred so far as to erect a gallows on which he proposes to hang the object of his enmity. His dark schemes are discovered and turned against himself, and he and his sons are hanged on the gibbet which he had prepared for another. Jonah is commanded to bear a message to Nineveh. He rebels against the order, and, thinking to flee from the presence of the Lord, takes ship for Tarshish. He is arrested in his attempt; the ocean is made the scene of his detection and his punishment; he is cast into the deep; he is swallowed up by a great fish; he continues three days in the belly of the monster, and he is not released from his prison until he gives tokens of penitence, and cries aloud to the Lord for pardon.

“We forbear to bring forward a multitude of other examples, the mention of which would lead us into too long a detail. The Jewish commonwealth was a *theocracy*, of which Jehovah was the declared, acknowledged, *visible* ruler. *There runs through this history a system of strict retributive justice, whereof the God of Jacob is the administrator. Within the pale of this peculiar*

dispensation, virtue met its recompense and vice its punishment with a regularity that was at once unfailling and notorious—promises were proclaimed, wherein *temporal* blessings were held forth as the reward of holiness; threatenings were published, wherein *temporal* punishments are announced as the fruit of disobedience. The history of the Jewish nation is a faithful commentary on the truth alike of the promise and the threat. It is the narrative of the proceedings of a tribunal, administered with a justice that was accurate and impartial in the highest degree. Already, ere the career of the nation was far advanced, we see Moses, their guide, appealing to this principle, pointing to the system which the Almighty had pursued in the past time towards his people, comparing it with the declarations he had uttered, noting the agreement of the two things, and, strong in the conviction that the system was stable, pronouncing this memorable sentence, 'Be sure your sin will find you out.'

"The history of the Jews, as a distinct people, runs on through nearly fifteen centuries after this time. The nation is presented to us under very different attitudes, under judges, under kings, in peace, and in war, victorious and vanquished, prosperous and afflicted, at home and abroad, free and in bondage. Their annals include many various aspects—the proceedings of the nation at

large, the doings of individuals, whether kings or prophets, warriors or statesmen, or men of low degree. But whatever be the aspect, situation or period in which we view their history, we are met at once by the principle in question, and we are immediately struck by the evident fact of a plan of close retributive justice, dispensing blessedness to the good, and chastisement to the ungodly. Nay more, in every situation we observe the people alive to this scheme, admitting it in opinion, however weakly it may influence their conduct. And we notice their teachers and prophets constantly bringing up the fact, employing it as a motive of action, doing so uncontradicted, and vindicating it by surveys of the past history of the nation. The New Testament ushers in a dispensation which in many leading circumstances differs essentially from the older plan. Thus the law of retaliation is done away—the temple worship, with its manifold forms and observances, is abrogated—the ministration of the holy spirit is brought in to supersede the ministrations of prophets. These and many other alterations are introduced. But in spite of such changes the plan of temporal retribution appears as obvious on the face of the new dispensation, as it did on the pages of the old. The period embraced in the historical portion of the New Testament is short—it is principally engrossed by the actions and discourses of our Lord, and the other person-

ages who appear on the scene are neither so numerous nor so prominently brought forward as in the case of the agents in the Old Testament. Hence it is not possible to illustrate our position by so many examples as formerly—still there are enough to sustain the argument. Peter denies his Master, and is punished by a remorse so poignant that it seems to have remained fresh on his memory through the whole of his subsequent career. Judas betrays the Lord for thirty pieces of silver, and, most horrible of all dooms, murders himself in hopeless and unappeasable remorse. Herod, inflated with pride, lends an ear to the voice of flattery which tells him that he is a god and no man. The angel of the Lord smites him, and he is eaten of worms—fit punishment for a worm that so far forgot its weakness, as to aspire to be God. Ananias and Sapphira insult the holy apostle by a deliberate falsehood, and are struck dead on the spot. Elymas, the sorcerer, practises his black art, and resists the truth; at the command of the apostle he is seized with blindness. Jerusalem, which had turned a deaf ear to the signal words and works of Jesus, and in the full rankness of her wickedness had crucified the Lord of glory, is visited with a destruction so fearfully intense, that since man was, or cities were built, there is nothing like it in the history of our world. Thus through a course of 4,100 years, which is more than two thirds of the whole period

that has elapsed since time began, and throughout the whole narrative of two dispensations, which differ exceedingly in many of their most prominent characteristics, are to be discerned the traces of a system of temporal retribution. Can any definite reason be assigned, why a scheme that endured so long, should suddenly have been overturned? Can a sufficient cause be alleged, why a mode of procedure that evidently obtained during 4,100 years, should not suit the last 1840 years? Is the Supreme Ruler so mutable in his arrangements that it is more natural to conceive the system to be altered, than that it should continue what it was? Is it not more agreeable to what we know of the character of the Almighty, to believe that his course of action remains uniform, and runs in the same direction, except when there are the most obvious reasons for a new order? We shall consider that the clear and continuous evidence of the Scriptures—the unbroken testimony of forty centuries—the absence of any intimation that the system of things is altered—the want of any proof that such a change would be beneficial or necessary—we shall conceive that these facts go far to establish the argument; and in any case, that they set us forth on our inquiry, with the strong likelihood of finding that the system for which we contend is the actual system of the moral universe AS IT NOW SUBSISTS."

E.

SCRIPTURAL ILLUSTRATION.

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." 1 Cor. xv. 19.

THERE have been various opinions concerning this passage ; but that which has most generally prevailed among Christians is this : that the life of a good man is a life of hardship and trial, which he is enabled to bear only by the hope of a final retribution in the future world, in which he shall be rewarded and the wicked punished ; but if there be no future state, and of course no future reward, then of all men the pious and the good are the most miserable. Dr. Benson, in the appendix to his *Life of Christ*, Diss. vi., has some very just reflections on this subject, which we cannot refrain from presenting to our readers.

In combatting the supposition that Paul intended to say that good men were more miserable in this life than others, and that consequently if there be no future life, they are of all men the most miserable, he makes out that Paul was not speaking of *good* men, but *bad* men ; for such, he says, the apostles certainly were, if Christ had not risen from the dead, since they had declared that they had seen him after he was risen, and conversed

with him. This was a sheer deception which they were practising upon the community, if Christ were not risen; and they were indeed, what Paul on that supposition describes them to be, "false witnesses of God."

Thus says Dr. Benson, "Though I allow that the apostles and other teachers of Christianity, in that first age, were, in general, very pious and good men; yet I cannot allow that the apostle considered them as such in the text. No, on the contrary he intimates, ver. 15, that it was upon the supposition that they were false witnesses against God and his truth, and had testified what they knew to be a falsehood, and were persecuted for that. Upon that supposition, I say, he declares, that they would have been *of all men the most miserable*. For in that case they were miserable in this life, and could not hope for any future state of holiness."

From this the Dr. proceeds to certain moral reflections which we here subjoin. They are worthy of the most attentive perusal; and we trust that our readers, especially the young, will read them again and again. We regret that it is not in our power to copy the entire dissertation.

"Our text is so far from representing that, upon the supposition there is no other life, a brute is better than a man, and a vicious man happier

than a pious and virtuous man, that, on the contrary, it is not so much as speaking concerning good men, but concerning wicked men and imposters; such as were supposed to be false witnesses against God and his truth; and testified what they knew to be a falsehood; and then represented them, in a state of persecution, *as of all men the most miserable*. So that the doctrine of our text doth most properly and immediately point out the misery of wicked men, or the connexion between vice and misery. And that connexion is indeed very remarkable, and affords mankind a most excellent lesson. There have been crimes which have given men more exquisite misery than being stretched upon the rack, or undergoing the greatest bodily torments." And again. "But all vice, in proportion to the degree and aggravation of it, is sooner or later so much misery. Envy is the rottenness of the bones. Revenge may gratify a man whilst his passion rages. But as soon as he has satiated his malice, the demon of revenge comes thundering back upon himself, and pours out her torments upon the furious and implacable, giving him more exquisite misery than all that he could inflict upon his adversary. The covetous and ambitious are never satisfied. For irregular desires grow much faster than to be appeased with the greatest success. The tumultuous pleasures of the voluptuous and debauched

end with a short-lived transport, but leave the mind in a disordered state ; create fears and dangers by breaking in upon the honor and peace of families, as well as upon a man's own honor and integrity, which ought to be dearer to him than all the world. Indulging to sense and appetite impairs the health of the body, destroys the vigor of the mind, breaks in upon its peace and harmony, puts the faculties in disorder, creates tumult and confusion, anarchy and uproar, distress and misgivings of heart ; brings on various diseases ; and sometimes sudden and premature death. Is it virtue, or vice, that commonly ruins men's estates, disturbs the comfort of families, renders men useless and contemptible in themselves, and the scorn and detestation of the sober and thinking part of mankind, whose esteem and approbation every wise man would above all things court ? Who are the grand disturbers of neighborhoods, towns or kingdoms ? the plagues and terrors of human society ? the virtuous or the vicious ? and it ought to be added that wicked men, in *common* calamities, are as liable to suffer as the good, in war, famine, pestilence, sickness and death, and the like ; and that they want those supports and refreshments, under their calamities, which religion affords the virtuous and good men. But, if they were to escape more frequently than they do, it has been known that worldly success has been

some men's utter ruin, even as to the possession, and enjoyments of this present transitory life."

But, continues the Dr. on the other hand, "Between virtue and happiness, there is, in the wise constitution of God, the most close and strict connexion. The pleasures of a man are of two sorts, *sensible* and *rational*. The sensible pleasures of this life may be enjoyed by a good man, provided he indulges them no further than reason allows. The checks of conscience which restrain him, and direct him to keep within proper bounds, are so far from being his misery, that they are his honor and singular felicity. They either keep him in the paths of righteousness or lead him back to virtue's ways, when he has wandered from her amiable paths. But besides *sensible* enjoyments, the good man has the pleasure of acquiring useful knowledge; and the high delight which flows from virtuous practice: of which last the wicked man is wholly incapable, as long as he continues wicked. The good man, therefore, is so far from being *of all men the most miserable*, that he is of all men the most happy. His piety doth not lead him to any monkish austerities, or ridiculous mortification and abstinence; but conduces to the health of his body, the peace, order, and harmony of his mind, the good of his estate, and the welfare of his family and friends. He has deservedly more reputation than his wicked neighbor; is

more valued by thinking and good men ; is in reality a better member of civil society, as well as an ornament to the church of God. Whether his life be longer or shorter, it is formed upon the rules of wisdom, that is, of virtue and true religion. He can look all round him, and take satisfaction that all is well on every side. If he considers his relation to God, or man ; if he looks backward or forward ; considers his present existence, that which is to come, all, all yield him satisfaction and delight. He considers himself as raised from nothing to the rank and dignity of a rational creature ; that he is acting according to his rank by imitating the most perfect being ; that he stands well with him ; and that, as he is like him now, he hopes to be happy with him forever. Blessed is the person that is in such a case ; yea, thrice happy that man, whose God is the Lord.

“ One would think that as piety and virtue conduce to men’s present happiness, this argument might have some weight with the voluptuous, ambitious and worldly-minded men ; and put them upon trying virtue’s ways, which are all *ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are paths of peace*. There is not, indeed, perfect felicity in this world ; but the good man comes the nearest to it of any man upon the face of the earth. And virtue and true religion tend to a man’s most solid and durable felicity.”

F.

IMPORTANT SUBJECT CONSIDERED.

BY REV. HOSEA BALLOU.

As it is contended by the advocates of a state of imperfection and misery, in the future world, for those who leave this in a state of ignorance of the gospel, and unreconciliation to God, that unless there be a dispensation of retribution and discipline hereafter, Jesus Christ cannot be the Saviour of such, I propose to suggest some thoughts relative to so weighty a subject.

The writer of this entertains a hope, that his brethren, who may not agree with him in all those particulars, will consider that he is only endeavoring to investigate and inquire into things which have not been understood in the Christian church, and about which little or nothing has been believed, except what has rested on the mere force of tradition alone. He feels no disposition to require of others their implicit assent to what he may suggest; but he is desirous of contributing a mite, to the promotion of useful inquiry, which may lead to profitable understanding.

Let us, at this time, confine our investigation to the following question: If one who goes out of this world ignorant of Jesus Christ, and inexperienced in that reconciliation to God, which a knowledge of the gospel effects in the soul, com-

mences his sentient existence, in the future state, in an immortal constitution, in which no temptation to sin will ever try the soul; but where the light of divine wisdom will direct every thought, and fix the affections entirely on the beauties and glory of infinite goodness, by which the sweetest and most tranquil felicity will be enjoyed, how then is Jesus Christ the Saviour of this man?

It is true that there are many other important questions which relate to this general subject, some of which the writer of this may hereafter notice, but the above particular question will engage his attention for the present.

In order to answer this question, it seems necessary, in the first place, to present to the reader the characters in which the Scriptures represent Jesus Christ as the Saviour of mankind. We may not notice all the emblems used in Scripture for this purpose, but some of the most important. The most important character in which Jesus Christ is held forth, in the Scriptures, as the eternal life of the human family, as is humbly believed, is expressed in the words of the Saviour, recorded in John xi. 25. "Jesus saith unto her, I am the resurrection and the life." In 1 Cor. i. 24, St. Paul informs us that the Christ which he preached, is the "power of God and the wisdom of God." In John xiv. 6, Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." In Heb. i. 3, the Saviour is called the "brightness of God's glory,

and the express image of his person." It may not be necessary, for our present purpose, to cite more passages; the reader, however, can have recourse to many more. Let us now select a few words, from the above quotations, and contemplate our Saviour in the characters which those words indicate; and then apply those characters to the subject of our inquiry. RESURRECTION, LIFE, POWER OF GOD, WISDOM OF GOD, THE TRUTH, BRIGHTNESS OF GOD'S GLORY, AND THE EXPRESS IMAGE OF HIS PERSON. According to what we have now before us, Jesus Christ, in the all-wise system of God, our Creator, is our resurrection, our life; to us he is the power and wisdom of God; to us he is the truth, and the brightness of God's glory, and the only image in which we can behold the invisible God.

The subject of our inquiry is one who left this mortal state without faith in Christ, and, of course, without that reconciliation to God which such faith produces. And our question is, how is Jesus Christ the Saviour of such an one, if he is raised into an immortal happy state, hereafter, without first passing through another imperfect state? Ans. Just as he would be if this subject should pass through another imperfect state. For then, even after ages of ages of misery and sin, if such were his lot, that miserable state, like our present mortal state, must pass away, and our

subject would, after all, entirely depend on Jesus Christ for a resurrection into a state of immortality and eternal life. Yes; Jesus must, after all, be our resurrection and our life; he must be to us all, the wisdom and the power of God; he must be to us the truth, and the bright mirror in which we may behold the glory of the invisible God.

In 1 Cor. xv. 22, St. Paul says: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." In this most important sense Jesus Christ is the same to millions of the human race, who have lived and died in heathen lands and countries, as he is to those, who, in this world, have enjoyed the light of divine revelation, and the obedience of faith. In this also, he is the same to the millions of infants, who have had their birth in Christian communities, but have been called from this mortal existence before they were capable of being initiated into the mysteries of the gospel.

Those who find it difficult to understand how Jesus Christ is the Saviour of those who die in a state of unbelief, unless they experience a state hereafter of punishment, ought to consider how their views can be consistent with the fact, that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of those who die in infancy. If the question labors, how Jesus Christ can save without bringing the subject of his favor to enjoy himself, through the medium of faith and

repentance, let the question apply to those who die in infancy. How can they, in the future world, be brought to repentance, unless they sin in that state, as they have committed no sin in this? But faith is needed only in a state of anticipation, which state is imperfect, and repentance is necessary only in a state where sin exists, which is also imperfect.

It should be duly considered, that the method by which faith and repentance are produced, in the present imperfect state, is by the manifestation of divine realities to the understanding. When these divine realities are manifested, through the medium of their proper evidence, it is then that we believe the truth; which truth was just the same before we believed it, as it is afterward. And the divine goodness which appears in those facts in which we believe, naturally leads to repentance; because there is something infinitely better in these good things of the kingdom of God, than anything of which we before had possession. But if our ideas of the future state of man be conformable to the testimony of St. Paul in 1 Cor. xv., in which we are certified, that the state in which all men will be made alive in the resurrection is Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, it seems unreasonable to believe that faith and repentance will be necessary in that state. Respecting our resurrection into an im-

mortal state, the apostle says, in the chapter referred to above, " It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption ; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory ; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power ; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. The first man is of the earth, earthy ; the second man is the Lord from heaven—And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." All Christian people believe, that for our enjoyment of divine things, in this state of existence, it is necessary that we believe in this divine system of eternal life, which is manifested through the resurrection of Jesus ; and that this faith should be productive of emendation of life : but that this faith or any of its consequences will be necessary in a state of immortality, perhaps we have no more authority for believing, than we have for believing that such faith is necessary for Christ himself, in that immortal state.

It seems important that we notice, that the apostle, in the foregoing quotation, speaks of two men, the first and the second. The first is of the earth and is earthy ; the second is the Lord from heaven. And he says : " As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." He does not present us with a man between these two, which is neither earthy nor heavenly, in the image of which we are to

exist and suffer for our sins, committed in the earthly man, for a season, before we are introduced into the image of the heavenly. But it seems absolutely necessary to suppose a *third*, or rather a *middle* man, state, or constitution, which is neither earthly nor heavenly, in order to maintain the opinion, that, after this life is ended, the greatest part of the human family are to undergo a dispensation of punishment, before they are made alive in Christ, according to the apostle's representation, above noticed.

Whether the foregoing suggestions are accepted as being entirely consistent with the gospel, or not, a hope is entertained that they will not be considered as subversive of the gospel, or as excluding Jesus Christ from being the Saviour of all men.

G.

FUTURE RETRIBUTION.

As the subject of a future state of retribution has received much attention, and as considerable ability has been employed, both to maintain and refute the doctrine, from Scripture authority; and as I feel well satisfied, for one, that the Bible teaches no such doctrine, it seems proper that I

should endeavor to be able, if possible, to give a satisfactory answer to such questions as are suggested, and such as the subject, in conjunction with the prejudices of education, is calculated to elicit.

If, in attending to anything of this nature, I should be led to discover that my present convictions are not so well supported as I now think them to be, it will be my duty, and I hope I should not shrink from it, to acknowledge the fact, in as public a manner as I have made known my present belief.

The reason why I am now particularly inclined to notice some objections which are suggested, is because these are now more relied on to prevent people from giving up the doctrine of a future state of punishment than any quotations which are brought from the Scriptures, which we acknowledge to be our only infallible guide. It appears very evident, that all those passages, which have been generally applied to a state of retribution in a future world, are capable, to say the least, of an application which finds their accomplishment in the present mode of existence. And it seems that those who feel engaged in supporting the former and general use of the above-mentioned passages are sufficiently aware of this fact, which renders it necessary for them to propose these arguments, not from Scripture, but from reason.

It is now but a few days since I enjoyed a very pleasant opportunity, in conversation with an Unitarian preacher. We found that on most of subjects, embracing doctrines, we were perfectly agreed; and I thought he manifested as little relish for orthodoxy as myself. But there was one question with which he seemed disposed to favor the doctrine of a future retribution, though he was, by no means inclined to contend that punishment will be endless. The sum of his question was this; if a man of power and wealth oppress the honest and industrious, and swell his own coffers, by such oppressions; if he, being artful, in order to cover his iniquities, goes so far in them as to persecute and put the just to death, all the time so deceiving the public as to secure to himself the respect and even homage of society at large, and lives in this deceit and wickedness until old age, and dies suddenly at last without repentance, how can it be made to appear that such a sinner is rewarded according to his works, unless he receive a punishment for his sins in a future state?

In reply to this question, which, be sure, is not new, but has been urged against the universal doctrine as long as I can remember to have heard of Universalism, I was led to proceed as follows:—

1. If it had pleased our heavenly Father to reveal in his written word anything which so applies

to this question, as to make it evident that such a person, so living and so dying, must be punished in the world to come, there could be no need of this question, because such Scripture being adduced would decide the whole controversy. Here I paused, and intimated that if he believed that there was any such Scripture, I expected he would bring it in place of his question. But he, in room of intimating that any such Scripture could be brought, desired me, in a very good-natured manner, to proceed and answer the question as it stood. My reply then proceeded on the following Scriptures as its foundation: Eccl. iv. 1, 2,—“So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun; and, behold, the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive.”—Prov. iii. 17, speaking of wisdom, Solomon says: “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.” xiii. 15: “The way of transgressors is hard.” Isa. lvii. 21: “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”

The first of the above passages seemed to meet his question as directly as if it had been written for that express purpose; and, taken in connexion with the others, seemed to lay open the whole

subject. All who are oppressed under the sun enjoy as much peace and pleasantness as are the natural consequences of all the righteousness which they practise in walking in the ways of wisdom, which leaves all their sufferings, which are caused by the injustice of their oppressors, no other character, in reference to themselves, than those physical evils possess, which are acknowledged to be inflicted by the hand of Divine Providence. As moral beings, then, our enjoyments, at all times, correspond with the degree of moral righteousness to which we attain. This being established, it must follow, of course, that the testimony which supports it has equal force to maintain, on the other hand, that the transgressor, at all times, as a moral being, suffers in a due proportion to the degree of wickedness by which he is characterized. The man, therefore, who was made the subject of the Unitarian's question, did, in fact, endure a suffering, during his whole lifetime, which corresponded with the wickedness which he had practised. As to what this man *appeared* to enjoy, there certainly could not be any more of moral enjoyment than there was of conscious integrity in the means which procured his enjoyment; and surely no Christian ought to allow that sensuality is real happiness.

If it were the sentiment of Solomon, that oppressors, after they die, are miserable in conse-

quence of the oppressions which they practise while they live, and that they enjoy much while they are practising their oppressions, why should he say, as above quoted?—"Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive."—Whether this sort of reasoning gave my Unitarian brother any satisfaction, or not, he did not directly inform me; though by his smiling and making no objections to my answer, I thought that he did not view it to be very exceptionable.

It seems proper that we should endeavor to bring this subject, of a retribution in another state of existence for deeds done in this, into view, as it is presented to the common mind under the influence of common prejudice. The necessity of examining this subject in this relation will be acknowledged by the candid, when the fact is realized, that it is this common prejudice which is the main support by which this doctrine is upheld.

It is now fresh in my recollection, how the doctrine of Universal Salvation affected the common mind, when it was first talked of in the vicinity where my youth was spent. The doctrine excited horror mingled with disgust, and was denounced as the most dangerous heresy ever propagated. Dangerous, on account of two certain consequences; 1st. The entire prostration of all piety

and morality in society, in this world ; and, 2d. The certainty of everlasting condemnation in the future. At that time, what is now rather seldom hinted, even in a low voice, viz., if I believed so, I would lie, cheat, indulge in dissipation, wallow in sin of every kind, not hesitating to take the lives of my neighbors, my family, or even my own,—was then loudly vociferated from almost every lip, and I was perfectly satisfied that such must be the natural tendency of the doctrine. Time and experience have now entirely disproved the first of the above-mentioned consequences ; for many thousands have come into the belief of Universalism, since those days, and now constitute a *religious* denomination, professing and practising piety towards God, and good will to mankind. But as to the 2d consequence above-mentioned, we must wait until we are introduced into the future world before we can certainly know.

A question here arises : What were the habitual prejudices of common minds, which caused the doctrine of Universal Salvation to be so much abhorred ? The candid reader, it is confidently believed, will see a sufficient similarity between this case and that represented by our Saviour, by the laborers in the vineyard, to allow that the former cannot be entitled to a better character than the latter. Those, in the parable, who murmured, complained because those who wrought

but one hour were made equal with themselves, who had borne the burden and the heat of the day. On the same principle which they supposed their murmurings were just, they would have maintained that if they had known that they were to receive no more than those who wrought but one hour, they would not have gone into the vineyard in the morning. Now, if the objection against the doctrine of no retribution in the future world for deeds done in this, which objection I am endeavoring to consider, be not of a character similar to the objection which the murmuring laborers stated against the good man, I have made a mistake. But I cannot believe that any one will undertake to show me where the mistake lies.

The objection then, and the prejudices of the common mind which support the objection, seem to stand thus: If our neighbors who are not so godly as we are, and especially the extremely vile, are not to be punished in the future world for their wicked deeds in this, then there must be partiality in our heavenly Father's government, though he has promised to reward every man according to his works. The moment we see this objection in connexion with these common prejudices, we find the whole superstructure founded on an opinion which we have already refuted, showing that the morally righteous, in the present state, enjoy a moral recompense which per-

fectly agrees with their moral characters ; and that the morally vile endure, in the present state, a moral privation and infelicity, which constitute an exact balance of their sins.

I shall now consider the objection against the doctrine of no retribution in the future world for deeds done in this, as it relates to the alleged necessity of such retribution in the future state, in order to prepare the impenitent for a state of happiness.

The objection, in this form, has one amiable quality which was not discovered in the other views, in which we have considered it. It now becomes disencumbered of the doctrine of retaliation, and ceases to oppose on the ground of partiality. He who urges the objection, in its present shape, feels no disposition to maintain the doctrine of future retribution merely because he is not willing that the chiefest of sinners should be happy immediately, even to day, nor yet because such may not have suffered what punitive justice requires ; but his objection, against no future punishment, now rests on the necessity of punishment in the future world, as a corrective, designed to bring the impenitent to a holy submission to the divine government, and to the law of love.

In order to give the objection a due consideration, in the shape in which we now have it, it be-

comes necessary to inquire respecting the nature and tendency of punishment to produce the reconciliation to the divine government, which our objection sets up as the effect to be produced by it. This inquiry will necessarily ask, what sort or kind of punishment will naturally tend to bring the sinner to love the law of holiness? The objector is called on to resolve this question in his mind; for if he does himself love the law of holiness, and if he was brought thus to love, by being exercised with punishment, no doubt he can answer the question. The question seems a proper one for the consideration of all those who profess to be genuine lovers of holiness. Were they brought into the spirit of this love by enduring punishment, such as is contended will be inflicted on the wicked in the future world? This question is of such importance, that it may be urged in another form. Were the ancient patriarchs, the prophets of old, the apostles and primitive Christians brought into the spirit of divine love, by enduring such punishment as is threatened to be inflicted on the wicked in the future world?

If this question be duly considered, in its various bearings, it will, undoubtedly, operate as a hammer on the doctrine of future retribution as we are now considering it, and if it do not entirely break it in pieces, it must render it very thin; for, as the subject now lies before us, it must be

granted at once, that there will be no need of any severer punishment, in the future world, to reconcile sinners to God, than those have endured in this world, who have been thus reconciled, unless it can be maintained that the wicked, in the next state of existence, will be more obdurate than they are in this world, which may render a more intense punishment necessary.

It is very possible that a correct understanding of the subject of punishment, as to its utility, may be of service in this place. That our heavenly Father does punish us for our benefit, by yielding us to endure the necessary and inseparable consequences of our crimes and folly, is a fact, which we have not only allowed, but one we have already sufficiently proved from Scripture; but that such punishment produces in us love to the moral principle of divine holiness, seems very doubtful. It is the loveliness of an object which induces the mind to love it, not the hatefulness of its opposite. Moreover, it must be allowed, that the proper, proximate cause of our love of the principle of divine holiness must continue, in order for our love to continue. But who will contend that punishment must continue in order to keep us steadfast in the divine love?

Let this subject be illustrated thus: The briars, the thorns, and the thistles which perplex and torture the traveller, who has wandered from the

right path, tend to stop his progress, and even to compel him to pause and consider. While in this perplexity, he hears a *voice* behind him, "saying, this is the way, walk ye in it." He turns and finds a high-way, a smooth and delightful path, in which he travels with ease. Now the facts stand thus: The difficulty which he found in one direction rendered him unwilling to proceed further; but it was the good qualities of the path which he found, which reconciled him to it, and which continued to grant him satisfaction as well as to engage him to continue to travel in it.

If we have now a correct understanding of the necessity and utility of punishment or chastisement, it shows us, at once, that there can be no use for this punishment in the next state of existence, unless there be some wrong path in which the traveller will there wander. There must be, in that future state, the same appetites and passions, the same lusts to tempt and draw away, as those, which, in this mortal state, lead into sin; or our heavenly Father must provide us with a different constitution, possessed of different passions and lusts, which may there serve to lead us into sins corresponding with such constitution and passions, or there seems to be no ground on which to maintain this necessity of punishment in a future state. If either philosophy or the Scriptures teach us to believe that our next state of existence is to be a peaceable state, I am in the dark respect-

ing this subject, and need to be conducted into the light.

I may now consider the Unitarian doctrine of future retribution, as they generally hold it forth.

I have never been able to learn that Unitarian divines have framed any system of doctrine respecting this subject. They appear to maintain it by no argument; but merely state it as a fact, and as if it were not disputed. They generally, or frequently, at least, state the idea, wholly or in part, in the language of some passage or passages of Scripture, which they very well know the common people understand to refer to such a subject, and entirely depend on popular prejudice to justify themselves in the procedure.

They congratulate themselves, however, on account of their not making the future state of the wicked quite as bad as our Calvinistic divines represent it; but if they find the Calvinists disposed to make use of this in any way unfavorable to their popularity, they will then go to work in earnest, and create a hell so intolerably frightful that it would even fright themselves if they should believe one half of their own story.

If the reader should say that the above statement seems to wear an uncharitable aspect, he must be told, that the sole reason is, it is a true, unvarnished representation of the case. If the question be asked, how I can justify them in their

proceedings, I answer; I have no right to judge them as to their motives, and therefore, as they are not accountable to me, I judge them not. "To their own master they stand or fall."

The doctrine of a future retribution, as taught by our Unitarian divines, maintains that happiness and misery, in the future world will be enjoyed and suffered accordingly as men shall have lived virtuously or otherwise in this world. This is their simple statement, and it is likewise the statement of Calvinistic divines; but what they respectively mean by this statement is vastly different. The Calvinists mean that all who are regenerated by the irresistible grace of God are the virtuous, and that all the rest are wicked, let them do ever so well, in a moral point of view. But the Unitarians are so liberal as to allow every man a due reward for all his virtues, and are just to award a due punishment for every transgression. It must furthermore be understood, that the Calvinists have but one heaven for all the righteous, and one hell for all the wicked; while Unitarians, whether they know it or not, according to what they preach, maintain that there will be no other distinctions in the conditions of men in the future state, than such an infinity of variations as shall correspond with the infinite variety of moral character formed in this mortal life. None, who have sinned, will ever be so happy as they would have been if they had never sinned;

and none will be so miserable as they would have been if they had been more sinful in this world. This doctrine certainly allows that everlasting condemnation will be endured, and everlasting happiness enjoyed by the same individual. For instance; David, king of Israel, will be forever justified for the good deeds which he did, and in that justification will enjoy everlasting felicity; on the other hand, as he was, in some of his acts, extremely wicked, so for them he will be forever condemned, and, in that condemnation, will endure everlasting sorrow. And, taking David for an example, so will it be with every individual of the human race. St. Paul, before his conversion to Christianity, was a most infuriate persecutor of Jesus and his disciples, for which he must suffer everlasting condemnation; but after his conversion he was a faithful disciple and minister of his divine Master, and for this he will enjoy everlasting justification. And, taking St. Paul for an example, so will it be with all mankind.

I shall not undertake to state all the objections to this doctrine, which might be brought; but a few may be mentioned.

1st. This doctrine supposes that what is denominated sin, is an evil, which must be attended with evil consequences eternally, which constitutes an infinite evil. This should not be allowed, as it must involve the original cause of this evil

in moral blame. But it certainly does not require a very minute investigation to arrive at the fact that the original cause of whatever is must be good; and when this is seen, it is perfectly consistent to allow, that the final result of "all things must be the same as the original cause.

2d. This doctrine is not worthy of our belief, as Christians, for this very good reason, the founder of Christianity never taught it. Our blessed Saviour never informed his disciples, that they should suffer, in the eternal world, everlasting condemnation for the faults of this mortal life.

3d. This doctrine is a denial of the New Testament doctrine of entire sanctification. St. Paul speaks of a sanctification which shall leave neither *spot nor wrinkle*; and the beloved disciple says, The blood of Christ *cleanseth from all sin*. Surely, if David and Paul are to suffer everlastingly for their sins, and every other sinner is to suffer thus, it is very difficult to understand the doctrine of entire sanctification. But,

4thly. There is hardly any view of this doctrine, which discovers its impropriety more evidently, than to contemplate it as awarding everlasting happiness for our virtues in this world, but no reward for any good we may be employed about hereafter; and, on the other hand, as awarding endless punishment for our sins in this world; but providing no punishment for wrongs which the wicked will practise in the future state.

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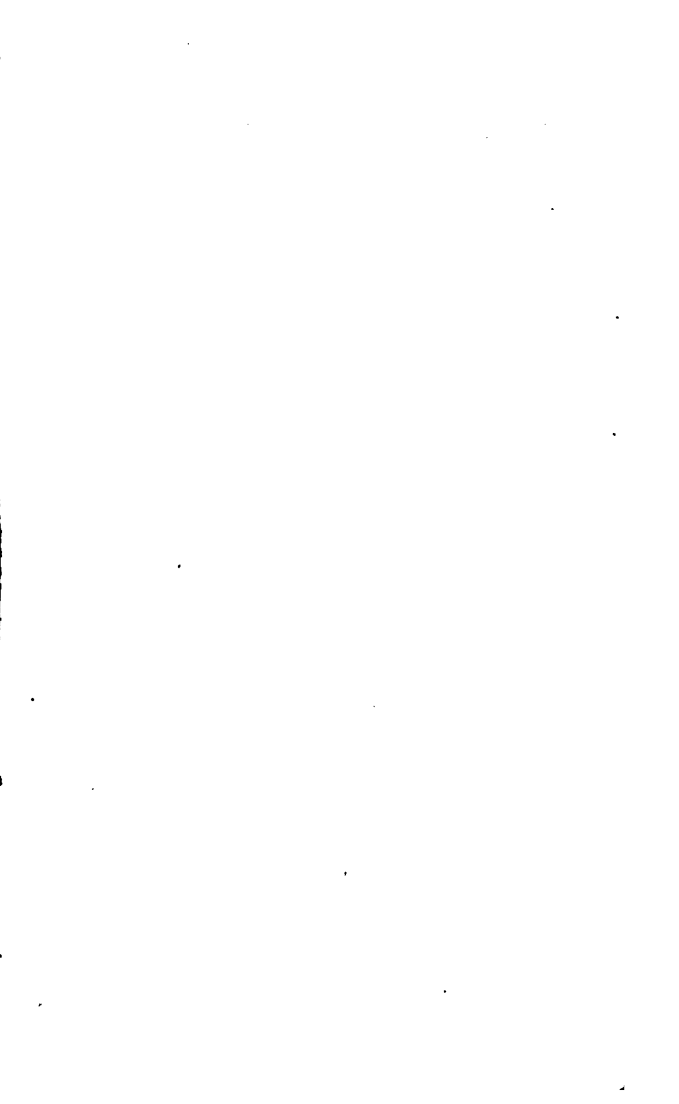
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